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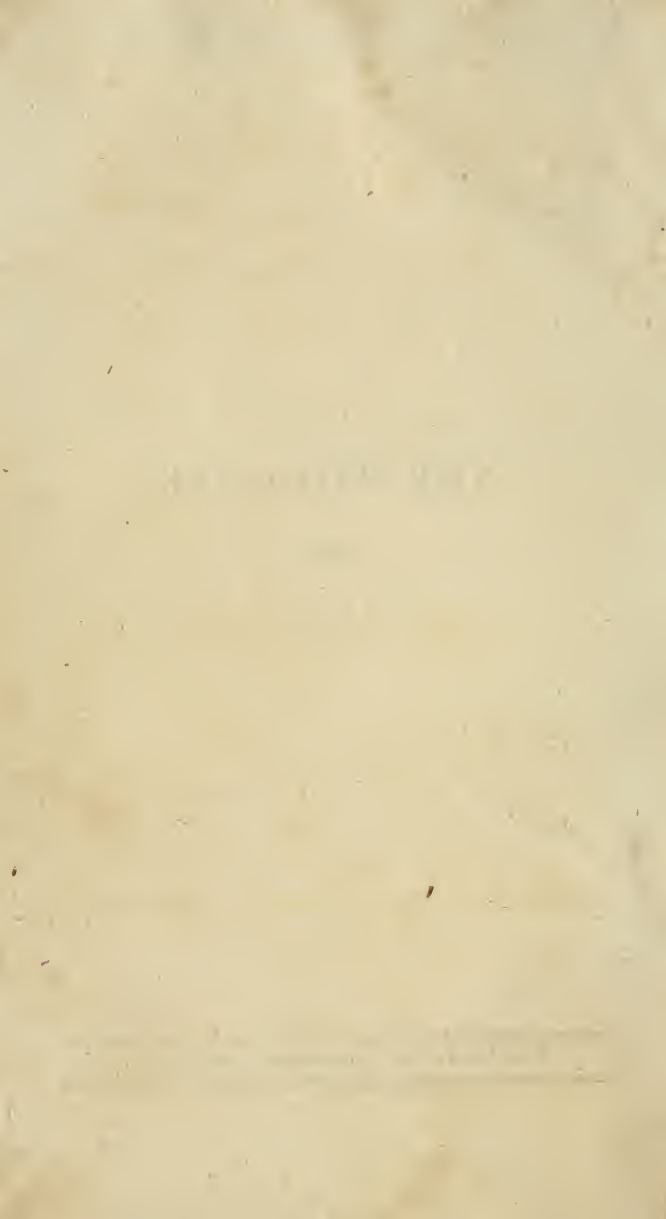
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THE
HYPOCRITE;

OR,

THE MODERN JANUS.

A Nobel.



IN FIVE VOLUMES.

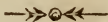


BY

SELINA DAVENPORT.

So spake the false dissembler, unperceiv'd.
For neither man nor angel can discern
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
Invisible, except to God alone,
By his permissive will, through heaven and earth :
And oft, though wisdom wake, suspicion sleeps
At wisdom's gate, and to simplicity
Resigns her charge, while goodness thinks no ill
Where no ill seems.

MILTON.



VOL. IV.

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1814.

THE
HYPOCRITE.

CHAP. I.

DURING Ellen's residence at the Castle, lady Caroline had informed her of all that she knew concerning the unhappy fate of lord Mortimer's beautiful daughter. She had shewn her the magnificent tomb erected to her memory; and had witnessed the tear of unaffected sensibility steal down the fair cheek of her favourite.

“Mason knows more than I do,” said her ladyship; “but I have never liked to ask her any questions, because the poor soul doted on the countess so
VOL. IV. B fondly,

fondly, that even now she cannot speak of her without being visibly affected. I hate to give pain intentionally to any one. She has taken a great fancy to you; and some day or other, when she gets in a talkative mood, may perhaps honour you so far as to tell you all that I am still ignorant of."

Mrs. Mason, as her ladyship affirmed, was indeed particularly struck with the irresistible sweetness of Ellen's manners; she never failed to visit her chamber once a day, and always at night, when Naomi's bell gave the signal that her young mistress had retired to her room.

Ellen was of the most grateful disposition; she was gratified by this flattering and voluntary attention from an old woman, who was esteemed by all the family, and whose conversation and demeanor spoke her to be far above the common. She therefore expected her regularly as the clock struck eleven, and always greeted her entrance with one of her

her fascinating smiles, and a kind inquiry after her health ; making her, at the same time, sit down, and generally placing the chair for her herself.

This pleasing condescension, from one so young and lovely, was equally flattering to Mrs. Mason, who usually staid and chatted for half-an-hour, or sometimes longer, if the subject of their discourse chanced to be on the untimely fate of her beloved mistress.

When this was the case, Ellen always listened to her with breathless attention ; the quick transitions of her speaking features, the tears of pity which fell from her expressive eyes, the sweet tones of her musical voice, endeavouring to sooth away the keen sense of past happiness, all operated most forcibly on the mind of Mrs. Mason. She loved Ellen for the feeling she displayed at the bare recital of a stranger's woes, and she hesitated not to confide to her all that

has been hitherto narrated concerning the loves of Althea and Deloraine.

During these confidential discourses, Naomi was dismissed to her chamber, that Ellen and Mrs. Mason might continue their conversation free from interruption.

It was now the warm and sultry month of August, and lady Caroline began to fear that she should be disappointed in her anticipated pleasure of a stolen interview with the gipsey tribe. None had yet appeared, and she had nearly given up all hope, when her maid informed her one morning that a gang of them had been seen in the wood, to the left of the Castle.

Delighted with this intelligence, she hastened to Ellen, half dressed as she was, to communicate to her the joyful news. "It will be such delightful sport, if we can but get Courteney to go with us!" said her ladyship; "I mean to dress myself

self like one of the maids, and I advise you to do the same. Be quick, Ellen; I must go and find Courteney."

"Finish dressing yourself first, I beseech you," cried Ellen, helping to put on her ladyship's gown, which she had brought on her arm. "How shall we be able to avoid the family if we go to the wood?"

"Leave that to me," replied lady Caroline; "all that I am anxious about is to get my dear preceptor to be of our party."

She then hurried down stairs, followed by Ellen, and found the object of her wishes alone reading, in the breakfast-parlour.

"My dear Mr. Courteney," said lady Caroline, "will you grant me a favour?—I will do any thing to oblige you in return."

"Your ladyship may command me," replied Leopold, closing his book, and

bowing respectfully as he rose from his seat.

“ You are the best-tempered creature in the world,” continued her ladyship, “ and the most considerate to us young girls.”

Leopold bowed again.

“ Will you, my dear preceptor, (for he had occasionally given her lessons in the languages during their absence from London,) walk with me and Ellen into the wood this morning? we hear that the gipseys are there, and we are afraid of going without a protector.”

“ Does your ladyship mean to have your fortune told, that you have thus honoured me by selecting me as a guardian?”

Lady Caroline hesitated, yet she thought she might as well tell him her intention, lest he should be offended at being deluded into the wood, and betray her. Putting on one of her most enticing

ing

ing looks, she replied—"I should like it above all things, if you would but go with us, and not discover our folly. I have long wished for an opportunity to hear what sort of nonsense they tell. Dear Mr. Courteney, you will eternally oblige Ellen and I if you will go with us."

"What would the earl and your mother think of my consenting to such an improper request?"

"Oh, they must not know of it!" hastily exclaimed lady Caroline; "we will steal out after breakfast, and get to the wood and back again by the private way. Do grant me this favour; you know not how highly I shall esteem your compliance!"

"Your ladyship is too well convinced that I can refuse you nothing; I will therefore wait for you and Miss Woodville at the back of the chapel. You must not, however, betray my indiscretion to any one. What would your mo-

ther think, Miss Woodville, if she knew of this transaction ?”

“ I would not lead Ellen into the commission of an actual error,” said lady Caroline ; “ but this is only an innocent frolic ; and under your protection, no harm can happen to us.”

The entrance of the family silenced the grateful niece of lord Mortimer, who hardly had patience to wait until breakfast was over. Courteney rose first, and quitted the room ; Ellen and her high-spirited friend soon followed. Hastily throwing off their muslin robes, they each put on a plain coloured gown, belonging to their maids, a black silk cloak, and cottage bonnet, tied under the chin with pink ribbons. Thus equipped, they ran down the back stairs and joined Courteney, who could not help smiling at their appearance.

“ And do you really imagine that this change in your dress will deceive the penetrating eyes of the gipseys ? you should

should also have left behind you all the nameless elegancies of form and manner which bespeak superiority of birth."

"Do you allow those people any penetration?" inquired Ellen; "do you think, Mr. Courteney, that they possess any supernatural powers?"

This was said with such gravity, that it deceived Leopold completely, and he replied—"It is not easy to determine upon that subject; they certainly have been known to divine many things that have actually come to pass."

Lady Caroline gave a glance at Ellen—"Dear Mr. Courteney, have you ever had your fortune told? you need not fear to trust me and Ellen, since we have betrayed to you our own credulity."

"I was induced to be guilty of that folly once, when I was quite a young man," said Leopold, "at the pressing desire of a friend of mine."

"And were you told any thing that was true?" inquired lady Caroline.

“ I found it but too true for my happiness,” replied Courteney : “ the woman was a perfect stranger to me, and yet she positively discovered circumstances known only to myself, and mentioned others, which came exactly as she had foretold them.”

“ Well, do now, only to oblige and countenance us, have your fortune told this morning ; we will not listen, I assure you, on my honour ; you shall go first, and reconnoitre the set ; pick out one you think the best of them, let her tell you yours, and then say that two of the upper servants of the Castle are coming to have theirs told.”

Courteney was blindly superstitious, although he had, as much as possible, carefully concealed this failing from his pupils. He was indeed weak enough to put implicit faith in the improbable affirmations of this illiterate and wandering tribe of vagrants. An opportunity, he believed, now offered of hearing whether
his

his plans would succeed against Ellen, and he determined to seize it ; appearing, therefore, to yield only to oblige lady Caroline, he left them at the entrance of the wood, and struck into a narrow path, which led to the tent of the gipseys ; Ellen and her ladyship enjoying this triumph over the demure preceptor of the young noblemen.

“ Oh that I could but see him now ! ” exclaimed lady Caroline ; “ I dare say he is preaching a lecture to the women upon the wickedness of their mode of life ; I hope, however, that he will not forget that we are impatiently waiting his return. Is it not capital sport, Ellen ? ha, ha, ha ! only think for a moment you see the prim-looking tutor of my brothers, with a face as long as my arm, gravely haranguing the gipsey gang upon their want of morality. Do not, my dear Ellen, think for an instant that I am a scoffer at religion, or that I think the really pious man a fit subject for youthful levity ;

but, Heaven forgive me ! I have often thought that a great deal of Courteney's devotion was assumed."

" Hush, he is here !" said Ellen ; " and I think does not seem best satisfied with his destiny."

Courteney's countenance indeed bore evident marks of vexation—" To oblige your ladyship," said he, " I have found out the beings you are so desirous of seeing ; they expect you ; keep strait on in that winding path, and you will soon perceive their habitation."

" Thank you a thousand times !" cried lady Caroline ; " but follow us behind the trees, for I do not much like to trust myself with them. Come, Ellen, you are not afraid, are you ?"

" Not at all," gaily replied her lovely friend ; " evil spirits have no power over those whom the Almighty protects."

She saw not the sudden start of Courteney, who slowly followed the track of their light footsteps : he stopped behind
a large

a large oak tree, which concealed him from the gipsey gang, but which was near enough to enable him to hear what they said.

Lady Caroline and Ellen now advanced towards one of the gipsey women, who came forward to meet them, and who immediately began to speak with their accustomed rapidity, and the usual cant which they address to every one.

“ Shall I tell your fortune, my ladies? I will tell you whether you are born lucky or unlucky ; I will tell you what planet you are born under, and the name of your husband—the colour of his hair—what eyes he has—and the first letter of his surname. Come now, dear ladies, let me tell you your fortunes.”

“ We are not ladies,” said lady Caroline ; “ we are only the servant maids of the ladies belonging to the Castle. Come, make haste, and tell me and Peggy whether or no we are to have John the butler, and Simon my lord’s man.”

“ Ah,

“ Ah, my lady, you wish to deceive me ! but I know by my art what you are ; you have not got your own clothes on ; you are a lady born, and can purchase many a good acre. Give me your hand ; I will tell you true, for all that :—now, my lady, I see you are not born to be crossed in love ; you saw this morning the gentleman you are to marry : you think sometimes he loves another ; his mind wanders sometimes, but for all that, you will be married before six months are at an end, and be very happy ; many things will happen before that, and some removals take place ; a duel will be fought, and one person lose his life : you have a friend, my lady, that is not quite true-hearted ; but never mind, my lady, you will be very happy before this time next year—and the gentleman’s name begins with a B.”

Lady Caroline smiled exultingly—
“ Now, Peggy, let us hear your fate ; I am quite satisfied with mine.”

Ellen

Ellen stretched out her delicate soft hand, which was taken by the dark-coloured gipsey, who shook her head significantly, and looked full in the beautiful face of Ellen, who shrunk from the witching gaze of her coal-black eyes.

“ Many dangers encompass you, my lady, just now ; you have enemies where you think you have friends : beware of the next month ; it may be fatal to you : beware of a tall, thin, pale-faced man ; he is an enemy that plots your ruin ; but don’t be faint-hearted ; if you get over next month, great honours await you ; you will triumph over all your enemies, and rise to great preferment. You were born to be mistress over many : don’t be faint-hearted, my lady ; you have lovers, but they are not all true—those you love best will deceive you most ; you will not stay as long as you expect where you are—your removal will be sudden, and owing to a paper—take care of treachery.

I see,

I see, by this line in your hand, that you are too open—you speak your mind too much. You have a female enemy that is very spiteful; she has something to do with the letter or paper which will cause your removal. Take care of next month; it is full of mischief; you will get over it, I think; you will meet with a stranger, a friend, a very great surprise, at your journey's end. You will come back to the Castle in better spirits than you left it; you will marry, but not yet; some obstacles in the way, but I think you will live to see your enemies' downfall."

"Alas, my poor friend!" exclaimed lady Caroline, half serious and half laughing; "but what, good woman, is the first letter of her husband's name?"

"His name," said the gipsey, "begins with a W; but there is a disappointment along with it."

Lady Caroline took the arm of Ellen, who did not place the least faith in one word

word the gipsey had uttered, although the warm blood rushed into her face and neck when she mentioned the letter W.

“ I don’t like these gipsies,” said lady Caroline ; “ they tell a strange set of stories ; you do not believe in them, Ellen ? ”

“ Oh no ! indeed if I did, I have heard enough to make me seriously uneasy : the next month, it seems, is big with my fate, as the Ides of March were with that of Cæsar.”

“ Heaven preserve you, dearest Ellen, from a fate like his ! ” exclaimed her affectionate and steady friend.

Courteney now joined them ; he had overheard the best part of the gipsey’s prophecy, and conscious of his own base designs, it increased his former faith in their judgment, at the same time that it added to his uneasiness, at the destiny which she had marked out as his.

Luckily they gained their chambers
without

without being discovered by any of the family ; and changing their dresses, sat down in Ellen's apartment, to talk over the incident of the morning.

“ Do not laugh at me, Ellen,” said lady Caroline ; “ but, upon my word, part of what the gipsey told struck me as very odd. The tall, thin, pale-faced man can be no other than Courteney ; God forgive me if I judge wrong of him ! but, as I said before, I have often suspected, that under an appearance of extreme humility and constant devotion, lies hid a great deal of vanity, dissimulation, and self-love. I would really have you be on your guard.”

“ My dearest friend,” replied Ellen, warmly, “ do not suffer your regard for me, and the silly nonsense of the gipsey, to make you unjust to one of the best creatures in existence. Has he not resided constantly under the same roof with the earl and your family for nearly
seventeen

seventeen years ? what action of his can have drawn on him your suspicion, your cruel censure ?”

“ I cannot mention any thing in particular,” replied her ladyship, “ which, in your partial eyes, would authorize me to think as I do ; yet, nevertheless, I feel afraid that he is not that good man we have all supposed him to be. One little incident which I will relate to you first created this fear, though no one would be more grieved than myself were I to do Mr. Courteney any injustice. You know Homely Farm, where we stopped the other day with Edwin and Adolphus, to eat strawberries and cream. You remember how pleased you were at the appearance of the good old couple, and how you kissed the rosy cheeks of their grandson ?”

“ I do,” replied Ellen, “ and wish that you would call there again ; the boy quite won my heart by his engaging manners.”

“ I am

“ I am as fond of children as you are,” continued her ladyship, “ and we will fetch him some morning to spend the day with us ; but to my story :—the farmer had two very handsome daughters, who were young women when I was a mere child ; the eldest married a respectable man, a sort of companion and confidential attendant of that duke of Fitz-Aubin, whose noble conduct towards the late countess of Brandon and her husband has so much endeared^d him to us both ; the youngest daughter my mother took into her family, and unfortunately carried her to London ; after a few months had elapsed, this young creature eloped, and was not heard of for several years. My mother was extremely concerned, and her parents, of course, inconsolable. She was, however, at length discovered to be honestly employed in working for her living, by an old lover of hers, who married her, and brought her down to the parents, who had thought her

her dead. We were not then at the Castle. The young man she married was the son of a wealthy miller, who, out of delicacy to his wife's feelings, removed immediately out of the village, lest any of her young companions should reproach her with her elopement from my mother, and the sorrow her silence for so long a time had brought on her father and mother. The cause of that strange elopement was never explained, nor do I believe that, to this day, her parents are informed of the truth. Susan told Mrs. Mason, who is my informer, that she should never have visited again her native place, had not she been enabled to come down as the wife of the worthy young miller. This excellent creature took a mill very near the farm which belongs to the husband of Susan's sister; and the old people generally pay them both a visit once a-year, and bring back one or two of their grandchildren; but Susan has never been at the farm since,
and

and my mother, from motives of delicacy, would not bring to her remembrance her elopement by calling at the mill.

“ Now for Courteney ; I heard that he was a constant visitor at the farm during the time when the sisters were living with their father ; that he took great pains with them, to perfect them in common education ; and that, among our domestics, it was thought he meant to marry one or other of them : it was whispered, by one more bold than the rest, that he was certainly the cause of Susan’s running away ; but all knew the high opinion he was held in by my family, and the whisper soon died away.

“ Mason says, that on hearing of her marriage, and on seeing one of her children, he manifested some confusion ; but we will have the boy to-morrow, and try him ourselves. I asked him to go with me once or twice to Homely Farm, since we came here, but he excused himself,
by

by saying that he was engaged to walk with Clarissa."

"I know," replied Ellen, "that Mrs. Mason is not very partial to him, as she considers him as having acted unkindly to the countess, whose memory is still sacred to her: but, dearest lady Caroline, before I give credit to any thing injurious to the character of one so highly esteemed by your family and my own, I must have proofs strong as holy writ."

"Beware of the Ides of March," repeated her ladyship, with a forced smile, again recurring to the gipsy prophecy.

"I am fearless of danger," replied Ellen; "honoured by your affection, and that of my still older friend, the marchioness—possessing, I hope, the good will of all your amiable family, what have I to fear?"

"I will not seek any longer to infect you with my weak forebodings," said her ladyship; "but I dislike also the strange
'and

and constant private conversations between Courteney and Miss Beaumont; as the friend of my childhood, and the companion of my riper years, I love Clarissa, independent of our near relationship; but she is strangely altered of late, and absents herself from me in so singular a way, giving Courteney the preference to us all, that I am half inclined to quarrel with her. *She* was the first to break asunder the bonds of our ancient friendship; and I shall certainly not be very hasty or eager to renew them; I know the ungenerous feelings by which she is actuated, and should never have supposed that Clarissa could give way to so mean a passion as that of envy. If you have a female enemy here, my dear Ellen, it can only be herself; your beauty, and Edwin's attentions, has made her so, I fear; but Clarissa is not going the right way to secure the truant heart of my brother; and I shall be but ill satisfied

ed

ed with a sister-in-law who can descend to such petty contrivances as I begin to think her capable of."

Ellen felt a momentary sickness—"God forbid, dear lady Caroline, that I should give pain to any individual beloved by you! if I thought that was really the case, I would return home immediately."

"And so make good a part of the gipsey's fortune!" cried lady Caroline; "no, Ellen, you are *my* friend; my dear uncle bade me render his house as happy to you as your own; and no jealous, silly, mean-spirited girl shall have power over you, I am determined. Let Clarissa act with her usual candour; let her join us as formerly, and not chuse Courteney as her confidant, which I am certain she has done. If her affection for Edwin leads her to view you as a formidable rival, let her at least be a generous one, and not look as if she could eat us both up at one mouthful: I almost regret now that Edwin was ever taught to consider her as

his future wife, for I am very well assured that they will never be happy together; the will of my uncle must nevertheless be obeyed, and poor Edwin, I fear, will be the second sacrifice to the ambitious views of lord Mortimer."

She was now obliged to leave her favourite, to attend a summons from the dowager marchioness.

Ellen, although not at all inclined to superstition, could not wholly banish from her mind the incident of the morning; in spite of her own endeavours to the contrary, the conversation of the gipsy, and the credulity of lady Caroline, occupied her thoughts. To repress a weakness of which she was ashamed, she sat down to write to her sister and the Miss Maxwells. Having performed this pleasing task, she rang for Naomi, to assist her in dressing for dinner.

This young woman was uncommonly attached to Ellen; and as she had received an education better than the general-
ity

ity of domestics, and was esteemed by Mrs. Woodville as a valuable attendant for her daughters, she was therefore treated by them with more familiarity than she would otherwise have been. The disposition of Ellen led her to be kind to every human being; but she was well aware of the impropriety of making too free with inferiors, and that the ignorant and vulgar soon cease to respect the person who allows them to take the slightest liberty in their presence.

Naomi was an exception to this rule—the affability of Ellen increased her regard, and added to her gratitude, which she evinced to all those who were loud in the praise of her young mistress. As none were more lavish of their admiration than the valet of lord Edwin, so he in proportion possessed the largest share of Naomi's affections, which Simpson appeared most warmly to return; and Mrs. Mason, who was held in high veneration by all the household, began to

rally Naomi upon the preference she had gained.

Ellen, as soon as her maid had attended her summons, good-naturedly asked if she had a letter to send home, as she would enclose it in one of her own? She then inquired if she had paid a visit to the gipseys?

Naomi confessed that she had been, with two of the house-maids; but that she did not believe a word they had told her.

“I am glad of it, Naomi,” replied Ellen; “it certainly shews your good sense; but was your fortune represented as good or bad?”

“I would tell you, Miss Ellen, only I fear that you will laugh at me.”

“Indeed I will not. You know, Naomi, that I committed the same piece of folly myself this morning. Come, let me hear how long I may expect to retain you about my person; I dare say some of the young men of the Castle
have

have already done their best to persuade you against leading much longer a single life."

Naomi's colour deepened—"The gipsy told me the same," said she; "but I declare that the butler and Simpson are the only two men that ever made love to me yet."

Ellen smiled—"And how many more, Naomi, would you wish to have?"

"None, Miss; only the woman said I had many lovers; and then she told me such a heap of stuff about enemies, and speedy removals, and great surprises, and money unexpectedly, that I cannot remember half what she said."

"But, Naomi, you have not forgot when you were to be married?" said Ellen, archly.

"Oh! I was to be disappointed in my first lover," cried Naomi, "and to marry the man I should refuse; but I believe I was to be very happy in the end."

“ Well, that was kind of her, however, Naomi ; and I am glad to find that the disappointment does not affect you much.”

“ Oh, not at all, Miss, I assure you ; for I don’t believe it will ever happen.”

Ellen smiled again.

“ But, Miss Ellen, I think the gipsey must have told Mr. Courteney his fortune, for I met him a little time ago, and he looked so black, and so gloomy, as if he had heard a terrible deal of ill-luck.”

“ He is too wise,” said Ellen, “ to listen to such nonsense ; or if he did, to place any faith in what might be told him.”

Having finished dressing, she descended to the dining-parlour, where she found the family assembled. Ellen thought it might be fancy, but she could not help imagining that Miss Beaumont viewed her with a kind of malignant satisfaction ; she however spoke to her more than she
commonly

commonly did, and Ellen began to hope that she should soon be restored to her former friendship.

The brow of lord Mortimer was not as tranquil as usual ; he appeared to be striving against painful recollections, which his sister and her husband tenderly endeavoured to dissipate.

Lady Caroline, whispering, said to her favourite—" I know the cause of my poor uncle's uneasiness—this is the day before that on which his daughter died ; and, as it is the first August he has ever passed in the Castle since that melancholy event, his spirits are more than usually depressed."

Ellen cast a glance towards the suffering father ; her tender looks, her sweet voice, sweeter far than ever, from the sympathy of her feelings, seemed to lull the troubled mind of lord Mortimer. He rose early from table, and requested Ellen and lady Caroline to walk with him. Both willingly obeyed ; and after an

hour's stroll through the woods, he returned more composed.

Anxious to amuse him, Ellen took her harp; and though the state of her own mind would have induced her to select the most plaintive airs, she nevertheless made choice of those more adapted to excite lively ideas. Lord Edwin accompanied her in some duets; and Ellen felt the rose grow deeper on her cheek, as she read in his languishing black eyes the fond emotions of his soul. The evening concluded with a family concert, which was by no means deficient in execution and skill.

Lord Mortimer thanked the young people for their willingness to entertain him, and owned that he had been highly gratified by their performance—"What shall we do, Caroline, to reward them?" said he, turning to the dowager marchioness; "suppose we invite the neighbouring families to a ball, on the seventh of September; it is the birth-day of Jemima,

mima.

mima, and we will celebrate it as joyfully as we can."

This proposal gave pleasure to all, particularly to her to whom the compliment was paid.

"Dear uncle," said lady Caroline, "as it is most probable the weather will continue as warm as it is now, let us have a rural *fête*; the gardens of the Castle are admirably adapted for one, the trees being so disposed, that when illuminated by variegated lamps, it will look like fairy land."

"I have no objection, my dear girl," said the earl; "but let me hear how you will arrange matters, as I shall leave every thing to you, who first started the idea."

"Thank you, my dear uncle!" cried the delighted lady Caroline; "Ellen and I will manage every thing between us; I propose to make use of the suit of apartments which open into the garden; the saloon will be a capital ball-room for

those who prefer it to our velvet lawn, and the remainder of the chambers will serve for refreshments."

"Very well, Caroline; I approve highly of your plan," said her uncle, "and will desire my steward to attend you in the morning for your orders. Send him to London, where he will be able to procure every thing you wish for. Let us have the best band he can get, for good dancers ought to have good music."

All again expressed double satisfaction at this new arrangement.

"We shall have our *fête* in the first style of elegance," said the marquis, "since Miss Woodville and my sister are the directors of the whole. I heard this morning that the families of general Ashford and sir William Lisburne are arrived, if so, our party will receive an agreeable addition."

"I hope your intelligence is true," said lady Caroline; "young Lisburne is a very pleasant man; and as I wish to
give

give pleasure to every one," looking pointedly at Clarissa as she spoke, "I shall give him as a partner to Ellen Woodville, unless he engages himself to Sarah Ashford: and now I think of it, Adolphus, you may perhaps be of service to us two damsels, who, I assure you, will have a great deal to do against the seventh; we will admit you into our consultations; I know you will rejoice to have the opportunity of assisting Ellen;" she gave Clarissa another look, who coloured and bit her lip.

"You do me infinite honour by this flattering distinction, dear lady Caroline," cried young Beaumont, kissing her hand, "and you shall not find me ungrateful for your kindness."

"I believe you, Adolphus; but you are not to disclose our secret cogitations; we will monopolize to ourselves the blue parlour, where no one is to be admitted but ourselves, except Clarissa should feel

inclined to assist our judgments by her tasteful opinion."

"With such an auxiliary as Miss Woodville, your ladyship will not need any of my assistance," replied Miss Beaumont; "my presence would rather impede the progress of your employments."

All now retired to their separate apartments; lady Caroline telling Ellen that she should call her up very early the next morning, that they might have time to consult before the steward came for orders.

CHAP. II.

ELLEN, on entering her bed-room, looked around for the presence of Mrs. Mason; she was not there, and she felt disappointed by her absence. "Go to bed, Naomi,"

mi," said she; "I shall sit up a little while; but call me, nevertheless, an hour earlier than usual."

She then opened her window, to inhale the refreshing breeze from the water, and to enjoy the mild splendour of the new moon. At the sound of Mrs. Mason's voice she closed the sash, and hastened to meet her old friend: the traces of recent tears were visible on her cheeks, and Ellen tenderly inquired if she was unwell? at the same time leading her to an easy-chair by the side of the bed, on which Ellen seated herself, that she might be near her. "Ah! I remember now," said she, "my dear Mrs. Mason, the melancholy cause of your sorrow—it is the same as lord Mortimer's."

"Thank God!" exclaimed the faithful nurse of the countess, "I am however free from his self-reproach; to the utmost of my power I performed the dying wish of her mother; I devoted myself to her

her child. No parent could love one more dearly than I did the countess ; and she, sweet angel, always considered me, and even called me by the tender name of mother. Oh, my dear Miss Woodville, I shall never see the return of this fatal night, without suffering a part of those agonies which I endured sixteen years ago !”

Ellen affectionately wiped away her tears, at the same time pressing the afflicted nurse of the still-idolized countess to her bosom.

“ Never can I forget,” continued Mrs. Mason, “ the last parting between her and her husband ; poor fellow, how he adored her ! I think I see him now, as he entered the window of her sitting-room, for the last time, to behold his beloved wife : how he lingered on the seat of it, when it was time to quit her ! oh, well do I remember the expression of his handsome features, as he pressed my
hand,

hand, and bade me take care of his soul's treasure, his idolized wife, his expected baby."

Mrs. Mason here sobbed aloud; and Ellen's tears choked her utterance.

"Alas, alas!" she continued, "he embraced my angel mistress for the last time; she was too ill to admit him the next night, which was the twenty-seventh of August. She wrote to him, and to the generous duke of Fitz-Aubin, their mutual friend; I tied the letters to a ribbon, and let them down ready against his arrival; poor fellow, he never received another! My lord refused to see the countess; this preyed heavily on her mind, and, I fear, helped to bring on her death. It was on this bed her poor baby was born; it was here my beloved Althea died."

Ellen sprang from off the bed, and sunk on her knees before Mrs. Mason.

"Gracious Heaven! what ails my child? (for such Ellen loved to be called

by her) what did you see? what has thus terrified you?"

"I know not," replied Ellen, rising, and dashing away her tears; "but I felt electrified at the conclusion of your sentence, dear Mrs. Mason: and was it here, in my bed, on which I have rested so tranquilly, that your mistress died?"

"Yes, my sweet girl; but let not that idea alarm you: never did there exist a purer spirit, a more angelic being than the countess of Brandon! oh, she would not have trod on an ant, had she known it; she was the idol of us all—and to be taken from us so soon, hardly in her eighteenth year!"

"Shocking!" exclaimed Ellen, shuddering, and holding still by the hand of Mrs. Mason; "what must have been the sufferings of her husband, to lose both wife and child at one blow!"

"They were more than my feeble powers can describe," replied Mrs. Mason; "it was like separating the soul
from

from the body. Never man loved like him ; never man deserved a happier destiny. Unknown to any of the family but myself, he comes every year to visit the tomb of his adored wife ; and sometimes the duke of Fitz-Aubin accompanies him. To-morrow he will be in the chapel after twelve ; nobody but myself and the Homelys know of his coming."

" Oh that I could but see the idolized husband of the countess !" cried Ellen, hastily ; " dear Mrs. Mason, do you think I could hide behind some place, and catch a glimpse of his form and features ? you know not the gratification I should receive."

" Dear child, I can trust you, I am confident, for you have sense and prudence far above your years. You shall go with me when I open the chapel door by which Mr. Deloraine will enter ; I will place you somewhere, that you shall have a full view of him ; but, as you love me, do not discover yourself. The countess
had

had a fine miniature of her husband, which she lost from her neck on the night she was taken in labour, and which I have always thought was found and carried away by the gentleman that attended her; he was a stranger to us all, and Harris, who was then alive, and who was my lord's confidential man, brought him blindfold to the Castle: this naturally raised his curiosity, of which this curtain is a proof."

She then shewed Ellen the zig-zag cut in the crimson velvet curtain of the bed, which had been thus spoiled by the doctor who attended the lovely countess.

"I have put in another piece," said Mrs. Mason, "but you see the velvet and the gold-fringe is much fresher than the rest. I dare say the motive was a good one that prompted the stranger to make this mark, which must always remain; but as the poor baby was still-born, we have never heard any thing of him. My beloved lady did not live to know

know either the loss of the picture or the death of her infant. You look pale, my dear Miss Woodville; let me fetch you some warm wine and water."

"Oh, no," said Ellen, hastily, "do not leave me;" then recollecting herself, she added—"I am not used to be so foolish; I am ashamed of this weakness, and cannot account for it."

"My child, it is my melancholy that has infected you," replied Mrs. Mason; "shall I stay and sit up with you?"

"If you will sleep with me to-night," cried Ellen, "I will thank you. Indeed I cannot tell what to make of this new terror which has possessed me; I am naturally very courageous, and yet, at this moment, I seem inclined to start at my own shadow."

Mrs. Mason, to whom she had rendered herself sincerely beloved, embraced her tenderly.

"Such innocence as yours, my dear child, can have nothing to dread from spirits

spirits pure as your own. I often prayed to be allowed to see that of my sainted lady ; but the Almighty never granted my petition. Since her death, I have never let a day pass without entering these apartments, and frequently sleeping in them ; indeed I had little else to do until the last five years, when our housekeeper dying, my lord seemed to wish that I would take the situation, merely to give my orders, and to instruct a granddaughter of Harris's, a clever, steady young woman, about three-and-twenty, in all the knowledge requisite for the place. Thank Heaven ! all the domestics respect me, and willingly perform all my desires. In another year Betty will be qualified to become housekeeper, and I shall then have little else to do but spend my time as formerly, in these rooms, which will ever be sacred to *me*, though not one of my lord's family, except lady Caroline, have ever signified a wish to occupy them."

Ellen

Ellen now prepared to undress herself; she tried to rally her fainting spirits by repeating to Mrs. Mason the plan of the intended *fête*; but all would not do; she could not banish from her mind the heroic love of Deloraine, his agonies, or the fancied death-scene of the countess; even in her slumbers she thought she saw the lovely injured daughter of lord Mortimer, and she awoke sobbing.

The rays of the rising sun beamed across her chamber, and she rose with a cheek paler than usual. When dressed, she proceeded to the chamber of lady Caroline, who, with Ellen's assistance, was soon ready for their intended walk. Tapping at the door of young Beaumont's room, she said—"Awake, arise, and quickly join thy friends and allies on the Castle lawn."

Adolphus was not lazy in obeying the welcome summons, too happy in being thus permitted to enjoy the luxury of their society.

Lady

Lady Caroline's ready invention suggested many ideas, which were improved on by Ellen. They walked several times over the ground which was assigned for the scene of their amusement, and their plan was pretty well arranged by the time the breakfast-bell had rung.

Lord Mortimer kissed the pale cheek of his young favourite—"I fear, Ellen," said he, "that you suffered this scheme of pleasure to break your rest last night; you look fatigued, and your hand feels feverish."

"You are unwell, my dear Ellen, I am certain," cried the marchioness, alarmed; "let me send for advice."

"No, thank you," replied Ellen, smiling affectionately on her old friend; "I have merely got a headache; it is nothing else, I assure you."

"You had better lie down, my love," said lady Caroline, "for half-an-hour."

"Oh no, there is not the least occasion, I assure you," again repeated Ellen:

len: " while you are giving orders to the steward, I shall practise some of the new music which came down last night ;" she said this with her usual sprightly air, and her friends felt satisfied.

Lady Caroline and Mr. Beaumont now retired to the blue-chamber, and Ellen went to the music-room.

She had not been there long before lord Edwin entered, and inquired if he might practise his part at the same time?—" This new arrangement of my sister's," said he, taking her hand, and pressing it to his lips, " will make me an exile, but not a voluntary one, from your dear society ; I shall not be able to speak to you or to walk with you, until after the *fête* ; even then Caroline has contrived to spoil my happiness, by attaching me to the side of Clarissa."

" I am sorry, my lord, to hear you mention that as a subject of regret ; the company of your destined bride ought to animate you with rapture. Come, my lord,

lord, shall we attempt this new trio? the marquis, if you ask him, will perhaps accompany us, unless he is engaged."

"The marquis would be too happy did he know that you are solicitous to have him here: he is with his wife; shall I tell him your wishes?"

"Certainly not; another time will do as well as the present."

"Perhaps better," replied his lordship, sighing as he spoke; "a duet may be more agreeable to you than a trio."

"What do you mean, my lord?"

"Oh, Ellen, are you ignorant of my meaning? does not the ardent gaze of my brother speak too plain his admiration of your matchless beauties?"

"You insult me, my lord," cried Ellen, rising with dignity; "this language I should not have expected from the pupil of Mr. Courteney!"

She was quitting the room, when he flung himself before her; and catching both her hands, entreated her to forgive his

his jealous surmises—"Pardon my insolence, beloved Ellen!" he cried; "I can no longer conceal my adoration, which tempts me to envy every human being that touches this dear hand! Oh, say but that you forgive my rashness, that you accept of my apology! love the most tender could alone have prompted me thus to offend."

"Rise, my lord," said Ellen, blushing deeply, yet still preserving a dignity which awed the momentary libertinism of lord Edwin; "I forgive you, and would willingly forget both the offence and the excuse. Your love, my lord, belongs to Miss Beaumont; and I am the last person in the world to infringe on the rights of another."

"Dearest Ellen! yet hear me—I cannot love Clarissa! my uncle may oblige me to give her my hand, but my heart is yours, and yours only! Pity me, at least, beloved Ellen; do not let the rashness of this morning weaken the friend-

ship you once honoured me with ! consider how long, how faithfully I have adored you—ever since I first beheld you at the inn ! Oh, if I am destined to become a second sacrifice to the ambitious views of my uncle—if I must abandon the only object of my tenderness, grant me at least that sweet sympathy which you so readily evince for all woes but mine !”

Ellen saw the starting tear dim the lustre of his fine and eloquent black eyes ; she trembled, her colour varied, and her respiration became short.

“ Lovely and most beloved Ellen,” continued lord Edwin, passionately pressing her hands to his lips, “ do you pity the extreme rigour of my fate ? do you lament the fatal ambition and family pride which dooms me to a life of unavailing regrets and hopeless misery ?”

“ I trust that such will not be the case,” replied Ellen, in a tremulous voice ; “ Miss Beaumont is worthy your regard ; and the
the

the unfortunate prepossession which you mention will soon fade away, in the consciousness of doing your duty, of fulfilling the expectations of your family, and in receiving the tenderness of Clarissa."

"Never, never!" fervently exclaimed lord Edwin; "I never loved until I saw you; the impression you have made is too strong to be effaced by time or circumstance. I love, I adore you, Ellen, and shall continue to do so until my latest breath! Oh, turn not from me, Ellen! blush not to betray a generous compassion for my wretchedness! I have been advised to forget you, to think only of the obedience I owe my uncle, but my heart tells me that it can never feel a transport which you do not share."

"I dare not listen to you any longer," said Ellen; "your happiness and my own self-esteem forbids it. Let me go, my lord! I pity, I sympathize in your apparent agitation, but honour forbids me to encourage your passion."

She broke from him, and hastily proceeded to her own apartments: lord Edwin slowly sought those of his preceptor; to him he recounted what had passed, and expressed his utter despondency of ever gaining Ellen on dishonourable terms.

“I would sacrifice every thing to obtain her heart,” said lord Edwin; “I wish not to destroy the purity I worship. Ellen would be less dear to me the moment she became my mistress.”

“Folly!” exclaimed Courteney; “your inexperience, my lord, can alone excuse such romantic ideas. It is most probable, that while you are considering upon the *purity* of Ellen’s mind, your brother may act more wisely, and be perfectly satisfied with the beauties of her person. Every day convinces me, more and more, of the passion of the marquis; it will soon break through all restraints, and Ellen, with all her seeming *purity*, will, I make no doubt, be
contented

contented with a handsome equipage and a liberal settlement."

"My God! and can you be serious?" said his too-credulous pupil; "are women indeed such artful, such interested creatures? Oh, I cannot look on the heavenly countenance of Ellen Woodville, and believe for a moment that she is like the rest of her sex!"

"Proceed with caution, and you will be convinced of it," continued the treacherous Leopold; "work upon her compassion by your distress, your madness at the thought of losing her; get her but once to confess she loves you, and she is yours; we will then devise some plan to throw her into your arms, to make her seduction inevitable, and yet preserve her good opinion of her seducer."

"I shudder at the proposal," said lord Edwin; "what if I throw myself on the mercy of my uncle? Ellen is his greatest favourite—surely he will not consign us

to misery, whom he professes so strongly to regard?"

"It will bring on inevitable ruin, and the total loss of Ellen," replied Courteney. "*Who* could boast of such favour and affection as Edmund Deloraine? and yet, the moment he became the husband of the countess, your uncle not only tore them from each other's arms, but would even willingly have endangered the life of him who had been his distinguished favourite. Trust me, my dear lord, you must either resign all thoughts of becoming master of Ellen's beauties, or be led by me; for your sake I am ready to hazard every thing, in order to gratify your passion. I should hesitate as much as yourself to seduce an innocent girl, or to destroy her future peace; but the quick and dazzling glances which Ellen darts occasionally on the languishing marquis, inform *me*, who too well know what women are, that she is not
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the immaculate and artless girl you take her for. Courage, my lord, and perseverance will obtain all you wish. The freedom of the rural *fête* will allow of your pleading afresh your love; I will take care to draw off Miss Beaumont; be careful, nevertheless, not to alarm Ellen's necessary appearance of virtue; different women, like separate disorders, require different modes of treatment; get her but to confess she loves you—leave the rest to me.”

Ellen had no sooner gained the solitude of her own chamber, than she relieved herself by a burst of tears. The sudden and unexpected declaration of lord Edwin, that he must be wretched without her, produced this agitation of spirits—“ Oh, my beloved Theodore!” she exclaimed, “ thy fears were just! lord Edwin loves me—yet honour and gratitude forbid our union! Whatever may be my secret inclinations, my secret wishes, I will, if possible, conceal from

this amiable young man how deeply I sympathize in his feelings; I will not betray the weakness of my own heart, or the severe pang it will cost me to banish all hope from my bosom."

In the midst of these reflections she was interrupted by the entrance of lady Caroline.

"How are you now, Ellen? not much better, if I may judge from your looks. I came to ask your opinion concerning our dresses for the *fête*—but perhaps I shall only disturb you?"

"That you can never do, dearest lady Caroline! To tell you the truth, I am not very well; Mrs. Mason and I chatted till late last night, and I had very little rest: our conversation, you may suppose, was on the old subject; and I felt so excessively weak, as to be obliged to ask her to stay and sleep with me. A good night's rest will quite recruit me."

"I hope so, my dear girl," said her ladyship; "you must go to bed early to-night,

to-night, to make amends for your want of sleep. But, Ellen, tell me what dresses shall we have?"

"They cannot be too simple, in my opinion," said Ellen; "white sarcenet frocks, ornamented with ivy, and wreaths of the same in our hair, will be both becoming and elegant."

"So it will," cried lady Caroline; "I must run and tell Jemima and Clarissa, for we are to be all dressed alike."

Ellen, once more left to herself, began seriously to look back on her past conduct; she feared, that by not decidedly repelling the attentions of lord Edwin, she had given not only offence, but great uneasiness to Miss Beaumont; and she resolved for the future to shun her lover as much as possible, and to atone, by every act of kind attention, for the unintentional injury she had done her. Accordingly, when they met at dinner, Ellen replied in the sweetest manner to the inquiries Clarissa was compelled to make

after her health, and tried to draw her into conversation ; but this was impracticable.

To all the pleasing endeavours of Ellen, Miss Beaumont preserved a cutting coldness of manner, that awakened the pride of our heroine, and brought the blood into her cheek. She turned, at length, tired of attempting a reconciliation with Clarissa, to the animated and spirited conversation of Adolphus.

They took their evening's walk, as usual ; but Ellen contrived to escape the arm of lord Edwin, and under cover of conversing about the *fête*, accepted that of young Beaumont and lady Caroline.

Mortified and pained by this behaviour, his lordship returned to the Castle, nor did he venture to speak to her during the remainder of the evening. What his tongue refused to utter, his eyes betrayed ; and Ellen read in them the tender reproaches to which her altered manner had given birth.

By the advice of lady Caroline, she retired early to her chamber. She longed to make her the companion of her midnight visit ; but Mrs. Mason had requested her not to mention it, as the yearly tribute of affection paid to the memory of the countess by her husband would then be discovered. Ellen took up a book, in order to amuse herself until the arrival of Mrs. Mason ; she dismissed Naomi, as she was often in the habit of doing, and sat down until the appointed hour should arrive. Mrs. Mason came later than usual, and Ellen felt relieved by her presence.

“ It is better than half-past eleven, my dear child,” said she ; “ let us go down the back stairs, and through the private way to the chapel, lest Mr. Deloraine should be obliged to wait at the other door.”

Ellen threw over her light and graceful form a silk scarf ; and taking the arm of Mrs. Mason, stole softly to the private

door of the chapel: they entered; all was dark and silent, save the lovelorn note of the nightingale, which poured forth its plaintive tenderness in one of the tall trees which overshadowed the chapel. The moon cast a dim and melancholy light through the high-arched painted windows; and Ellen felt an awe, a dread by no means usual to her.

Mrs. Mason hastened to light a part of the wax candles, which were placed in a rich gilt chandelier, which was suspended from the roof of the chapel, and in a moment the magnificent tomb of the countess was wholly visible.

Ellen had seen it frequently before, but never with the same sensations. The monument, which appeared to open, was a specimen of the most exquisite workmanship; it represented the beautiful person of the countess as if in the action of raising the broken tomb, disencumbering herself from her grave-clothes; and while she fondly presses to her bo-

som her re-animated infant, seems soaring from her prison to the glorious mansion of eternal bliss ; the figures appeared to move, to breathe, every gesture, every look, was so faithfully portrayed. The enraptured gaze of astonishment, with which the rising saint views the near prospect of opening heaven, was characterized by a strength of expression which nothing but the inspiration of a master could have performed. It was a perfect likeness of the unfortunate countess, the sculptor having been entrusted with her miniature for that purpose.

Mrs. Mason placed Ellen behind another monument, which was opposite to that of Deloraine's adored wife, then hastened to unlock the door by which he always entered.

Ellen trembled with expectation ; she felt that she was doing wrong, in violating the sacredness of his sorrows by her presence ; yet it was no common curiosity that had impelled her to gratify her
ardent

ardent desire of beholding the much-injured Deloraine. She listened, and thought she heard the tread of footsteps; and the next instant she saw two gentlemen enter, in deep mourning. They prostrated themselves before the foot of the monument; while Ellen scarce dared to breathe, lest she should lose a sound that might escape them.

It was not difficult for her to discover which was the still-agonized husband of the countess; the deep sighs which burst from his bosom, the tears of bitter recollection which filled his large and beautiful blue eyes, betrayed that he was Deloraine; while the friend that accompanied him, and whose countenance bore marks of deep regret, of sorrowing affection, stood with folded arms, contemplating the tomb of the martyred countess.

Deloraine spoke first—"Another year has passed, and I still drag on a melancholy, cheerless existence; another year, oh, most adored! and thy Edmund may
be

be permitted to join thee and thy dear babe ! Althea, my sainted wife ! look down from thy blissful mansion, and witness the unshaken constancy, the never-dying love of thy Edmund, the noble, the steady friendship of our dear Fitz-Aubin ! sacred to us both is the remembrance of thy virtues—fresh in our minds the memory of thy wrongs ! Farewell, sweet image of my murdered Althea ; of my dear, ill-treated child ! Oh, Father of mercy, hear my prayer !—may thy sinful creature be allowed to mix with the pure immortal spirit of his adored—may this visit be the last he will ever pay this dear and sacred repository, in which his heart lies buried !”

Taking the arm of the duke, he turned from the monument ; and Ellen had a full view of the handsome features of both. Those of Deloraine fixed her attention ; such love, such constancy in affection, after the lapse of so many years, affected her sensibly : she felt as if she could have
fallen

fallen at his feet, and worshipped him ; never before had she known such feelings ; nothing but the injunction of Mrs. Mason could have prevented her from rushing from the place of her concealment, and following the impulse of her strange and undefinable sensations.

She saw him quit the chapel, and heard the door close. It was then that she came forward, and kneeling at the foot of the monument, in the same spot on which Deloraine had rested, she raised her innocent hands to heaven, in prayer for the happiness of him who had just quitted it—"Blest shade !" she exclaimed, "accept the heartfelt sorrow, the tender sympathy of one, a stranger to thy excellencies, except by name ! Oh that it may be my happy destiny to be loved so fondly, so faithfully, as thou art ! death would be a welcome visitor, if he could ensure me such matchless tenderness as that I have just witnessed."

Ellen

Ellen rose at the re-opening of the door. It was Mrs. Mason, who, hastily extinguishing the lights, conducted the trembling girl safe back to her chamber. Out of affection, Mrs. Mason offered to remain, which was gladly accepted by Ellen. Tired and unwell, notwithstanding her inclination to talk, and her secret reluctance to go to bed, that bed in which the ill-fated countess had breathed her last, on that night sixteen years ago, Ellen fell into a heavy slumber; while Mrs. Mason, too much affected by the remembrance of that dreadful night, lay awake by her side, moistening her pillow with her tears.

Nor was the faithful and affectionate nurse of the countess the only one whose rest was disturbed. Deloraine, on arriving at the farm, had learnt from dame Homely of the party then at the Castle; fired with the idea of Courteney's being so near him, he felt a strong inclination to seek him, and demand an explanation
of

of the reason why he had kept back the letters of the countess? The advice of his friend, the duke of Fitz-Aubin, however, changed his intention.

“ Leave the dissembling hypocrite, the base deserter of his wife and children, to the justice of Heaven, my dear Edmund !” said the duke ; “ his hour is not yet come. After smothering your resentment for so many years, do not let it now burst forth anew ; he has not committed any fresh act of perfidy, therefore suffer him to continue where he is, and enjoy the harvest of his villany, until the Almighty sees fit to call him to an account for his misdeeds.”

Deloraine yielded to the good sense of his friend ; but he could not calm the agitation of his spirits, nor the feverish inquietude of his mind, brought on by his recent visit to the tomb of his never-to-be-forgotten wife. Sleep refused to visit his weary eyelids, and the heaviness of his eyes, and the paleness of his cheek, betrayed

betrayed the absence of his night's repose.

The carriage which was to convey him back to the hunting-lodge of the duke had scarcely quitted the farm, when lady Caroline and Ellen Woodville entered it. The latter, in hopes of procuring another sight of Deloraine, had proposed to her ladyship to call and fetch the little boy, whose round, smiling face, and pretty manners, had so much delighted them. Ellen caught a glimpse of the chariot, which was unobserved by her friend, and all her hopes were thus at an end.

Dame Homely, proud of the notice taken of her grandson, dressed him in his best clothes, to accompany the ladies to the Castle; and upon Ellen's admiring his lively, intelligent dark eyes, she could not refrain from saying, that Billy was reckoned to be the image of his mother.

“ Your ladyship was too young to remember my daughter Susan; but though
I say

I say it, that am her mother, a prettier girl was not often to be seen than Sue; her eyes were as black as a coal, just like Bill's, and her colour was as fresh as a rose; always cheerful, always merry. Ah, dear heart! but she was a good deal altered when I saw her this summer; she had lost part of her fine colour; to be sure, she is now the mother of five children, and another coming, and that will make some difference in a woman's looks."

"I hope she has got a good husband," said lady Caroline; "I have often heard my mother speak of your two handsome daughters, Mrs. Homely."

"Thank God, both Cicely and her sister have no cause to complain of their husbands!" replied the farmer's wife; "they are very good men, and do all they can to make them happy; they want for nothing, that's one comfort. Cicely has got eight as fine boys and girls as I would wish to see; and her husband's former
master,

master, the good duke of Fitz-Aubin, is so fond of them, and so kind to Cicely and her husband, that there is no fear of their doing well in the world."

Lady Caroline expressed her satisfaction at such agreeable intelligence; then promising to send little Billy home in the evening, she took leave of his grandmother, and with Ellen and the child returned to the Castle.

"I think this boy's resemblance to his mother," said her ladyship, "will produce some change in the features of Courteney, should he have been the cause of her elopement; watch him well, Ellen, while I introduce him to the child."

"I will, to oblige you," replied Ellen; "but my life upon his innocence! I think Mr. Courteney the last man in the world to injure the peace of any one—especially an innocent and helpless woman."

Her ladyship conducted her young charge

charge first to the housekeeper's-room, that he might have some fruit and cakes, and then to the apartment of the hypocrite. Lady Caroline tapped at his door, and inquired if she might enter? Courteney opened it immediately, and seemed surprised to see her ladyship and Ellen Woodville, with a child.

"I am come," said lady Caroline, "to shew you this pretty boy, which we have brought home this morning; is he not a sweet creature? Can you guess who he belongs to?"

"No, indeed I cannot," replied Courteney, taking the child by the hand.

"Have you never seen a countenance like his?" continued lady Caroline; "recollect yourself—surely his black eyes and dimpled cheeks must remind you of some person you have formerly seen."

Courteney felt confused and uncomfortable. They certainly *did* remind him of *one* whom he wished entirely to forget;

get ; but thus called upon by lady Caroline, he knew not what to answer.

“ Surely,” cried her ladyship, looking full in his face, “ you cannot have entirely lost all remembrance of Susan Homely ?”

Leopold started, his face became ashy pale, and he dropped the hand of the little boy.

Lady Caroline cast a look towards Ellen. “ Is he not very like his mother ?” said she ; “ kiss the dear creature. I thought you would be glad to see Susan’s child, for I have been told how good, how kind you were to his mother.”

Courteney soon recovered himself ; but the suspicions of her ladyship were confirmed. Pressing his polluted lips to those of the innocent infant of the betrayed, the ruined Susan, he said, with affected kindness—“ I am indeed pleased to see this fine little boy—and, now you bring her to my mind, confess that he is
very

very like his mother.—How old are you, my man, and what is your name?—I am much obliged to your ladyship for taking the trouble to procure me so pleasing a sight.”

“I thought you would,” replied lady Caroline, in a tone of voice by no means consolatory to the feelings of Courteney; “you were so much interested in the welfare of Susan, and took such pains to recover her, after she had left my mother, that I brought her son on purpose to see you.”

“You are very good,” said Courteney—at the same time that he wished her at the bottom of the Red Sea.

“How it must have rejoiced you, dear Mr. Courteney, to hear of Susan’s marriage—to learn that she was restored to her parents—that she was a wife, and likely to be a happy one!”

“Certainly, lady Caroline, such intelligence must have been pleasing to all
the

the family—to every one that had partaken of the hospitality of Homely Farm.”

“ But to *you* in particular, I should imagine.”

Courteney again turned pale—“ And why to *me*, lady Caroline ?”

“ Because you took so much pains to instruct the poor girl, to form her mind to every religious and moral duty, to direct her in the paths of virtue, and to fit her for immortality. The bare probability, after this, of Susan’s doing wrong, of her forgetting the excellent lessons you had, with so much benevolence and disinterested kindness, taught her, must have been extremely painful to a heart like yours ; and to learn that she was married, and become a respectable member of society, must therefore be to *you* highly gratifying, as it proves that *all* your good precepts have not been either forgotten or lost upon her.”

Courteney breathed again—"You only," said he, "do justice to what I have felt upon this occasion; I own that I did feel interested in the fate of Susan Homely; none more sincerely lamented her mysterious flight, none more anxiously sought to find out the place and the cause of her concealment than myself."

"The cause is known to Heaven," replied her ladyship, gravely; "but I have no doubt that, one day or other, the true motive of her elopement from the advantageous protection of my mother will come to light; murder will out, you know, Mr. Courteney!—Come, Ellen, we have already taken up too much of his time, yet having afforded him such a gratification as the present must plead our excuse."

"Now, Ellen," hastily exclaimed lady Caroline, "what do you think of Courteney's innocence? did you not mark
his

his sudden start, and the changes of his countenance, on which guilt was plainly stamped?"

"Dearest lady Caroline, this hasty condemnation of a man whose character has hitherto been irreproachable, is not like yourself. You entered his chamber pre-disposed to think ill of him, and you quitted it, therefore, with all your suspicions confirmed. I certainly saw him start at the name of Susan, and change colour more than once; but, my dear friend, might not this proceed from another cause than guilt? it is not impossible or improbable but that Mr. Courteney, feeling, I suppose, in some respects like other men, might have been attached to Susan. If he loved her, his agitation on beholding her son thus unexpectedly brought before him—on being questioned concerning her—nay, even on hearing her name mentioned, is no more than natural; and I am far more inclined to believe that this was really

the case, than that he was the cause of her elopement ; to give credit to the latter, to make him out to be a cool, deliberate seducer, is to strip him of every manly quality, every moral virtue. Pardon me, dear lady Caroline, but I cannot countenance you in your unfortunate prejudice against this excellent and unoffending man."

" Let the subject rest then, my dear Ellen, since it is the only one on which we are at all likely to disagree."

" But, my dear lady Caroline, will you not endeavour to get rid of this sudden dislike which you have taken to your preceptor ?"

" My dislike is not sudden," replied her ladyship, " although it has lately been strengthened. From several circumstances, too trifling to mention, I have for a long while suspected that Courteney was not the man of God, the humble, unassuming character he was believed to be. The moment the idea of his
being

being a hypocrite entered my mind, all respect and veneration vanished. I have myself *no* doubt of his being the cause of Susan's flight ; and I have lately noticed several little things, which have confirmed me in my former opinion, that he is at heart very different from what he appears. Let us, however, change the conversation ; if I am wrong, I shall rather rejoice than repine ; but, until it can be proved that my ideas are erroneous, they will remain unchangeable."

Ellen perceived that, like the marquis, her friend would not bear contradiction ; no good was ever to be gained by thwarting her opinions, and she therefore dropped the subject, convinced that no eloquence, however powerful, could remove any dislike, or conquer any prejudice once entertained by lady Caroline.

CHAP. III.

ALL was now bustle and preparation against the *fête*; sir William Lisburne and general Ashford's families had called, and the younger part of each were highly pleased by the prospect of so agreeable an amusement.

As many that were invited lived at the distance of several miles, beds were made up for them at the Castle; lady Caroline resigned her apartments for that night, intending to sleep with her favourite; Miss Beaumont was also to share her mother's chamber; and the rest of the party were equally accommodating: by this means above twenty beds were at the service of those who might wish to accept of them.

Among the cards that had been issued, one was ordered to be left at the hunting lodge of the duke of Fitz-Aubin, in case
his

his grace chanced to be there. This was more a matter of form than any thing else, as very little intercourse had been kept up between the two families since the death of the countess; they had occasionally met at select parties, bowed civilly, perhaps exchanged a few common-place words, and separated with no trait of former kindness; the feelings of the duke not permitting him to behave as usual to the too rigid father of Althea, and the earl's regard having suffered a check from the cold and altered manner of the duke.

Lady Caroline had never been favoured with a sight of this highly-interesting character. She, as well as Ellen, felt curious to know whether he would accept the invitation, should he be at the lodge; both prayed that he might, for both admired and esteemed the noble friend of the unhappy lovers.

At length the day arrived which was to celebrate the birth of the young mar-

chioness, and to display the taste and fancy of lady Caroline and her favourite. The suit of rooms allotted for company were, by the express desire of lady Caroline, open only to herself and her auxiliaries, so that her own family were as ignorant of her designs as those who were invited to the *fête*.

By eight o'clock in the evening all the lamps were lighted, and every thing was ready for her ladyship's final inspection. Perfectly satisfied, she hastened to the apartment where her uncle and the rest of the family were assembled, and with a countenance expressive of her hopes and her kind intentions, she conducted them to the illuminated chambers. As they entered, the band struck up a beautiful piece of music, which heightened the pleasing effect of all around them.

"Surely," exclaimed the earl, "this is Elysium, Caroline, instead of Mortimer Castle!"

Such

Such it indeed appeared to all present. The finely-disposed walks of the garden were splendidly illuminated with variegated lamps; the trees, which were dispersed on the lawn, were hung with the same; different bands of music were placed, at proper intervals, between the clusters of shrubs, and by their unexpected harmony produced the most agreeable surprise; seats were carried round the lawn, and a beautiful tent fixed up, at the extremity, opposite to the ball-room, which was so managed as to appear in some respects a continuation of the same: the folding glass-doors of the latter were thrown open; at one end an orchestra had been erected for the musicians, round the pillars of which were twined the sweetest flowers; each side of the room was decorated with the choicest shrubs and hot-house plants, which sent forth a steam of rich perfume.

From the ceiling was suspended three beautiful lamps of exquisite workman-

ship ; those which were hung round the apartment formed the initials of the marchioness's name ; and, in several parts of the garden, the words " love and friendship " were visible. The supper rooms, and those for tea and coffee, were laid out with equal taste. The air was impregnated with the delicious odours from the various flowers that adorned them, between which were placed couches of rose-coloured silk, for the company to rest on. In addition to the light afforded by the variegated lamps, each apartment had similar ones to those which hung from the roof of the ball-room, and which contributed to render visible the beautifully painted ceilings of the supper-room, the antichamber, and the grand refreshment-room.

Lord Mortimer and all his family manifested their approbation and pleasure at this affectionate proof of lady Caroline's taste. The marchioness, as she read the words, and saw the initials, could not

help expressing her gratitude in the most lively terms ; while lady Caroline good naturedly declared that she was chiefly indebted to Ellen, whose superior judgment had been her director and guide in the management of the whole.

“ Where is my lovely friend ? ” exclaimed the marchioness ; “ I needed not this additional mark of her affection.”

Ellen sprang forward, to kiss the extended hand of Jemima ; who, throwing her arms round the graceful girl, pressed her to her bosom—“ Beloved Ellen ! ” said she, “ I feel so happy to-night, in being thus surrounded by beings that strive *who* shall most convince me of their regard, that I have no wish ungratified—unless, indeed, it is that of having my father and Dora among this affectionate circle.”

The company now began to assemble ; and as the Lisburnes and Ashfords were apprized of the dress to be worn by the ladies of the Castle, they had, out of

compliment, chosen the same, as well as several of their acquaintance. Lady Caroline, according to her first intention, and sorely to the chagrin of lord Edwin, gave the hand of Ellen to Mr. Lisburne. Clarissa, however, contrary to her expectation, engaged herself to the marquis, whose eyes, as they fixed on her innocent rival, betrayed enough to confirm the surmises of Courteney, and to strengthen the fears of Miss Beaumont.

Nothing could be more favourable than the weather; not a breeze ruffled the foliage of the trees; and it was therefore decided that the dance should be on the lawn. No sooner were the couples formed, than the unseen minstrels began their animating strains; and Ellen's spirits rose in proportion as she became exhilarated by exercise, and the fairy scenes around her; her beauty, her good-nature, and the blissful expression of her happy countenance, became the subject of general conversation; and by the
time

the second dance was over, all the young women were anxious to gain the friendship of Ellen, while their brothers were equally solicitous to secure the envied prize of her hand. No sentiment of envy filled any heart but that of Miss Beaumont; Ellen's smile, Ellen's voice, excited but one feeling, and that was interest.

Lord Edwin, partly a convert to the vile insinuations, and still viler counsels of his tutor, felt the most poignant concern at the conduct of Ellen; she had evidently avoided him since the avowal of his passion; and though he had sought every opportunity of speaking to her privately, he had been foiled in each attempt. He now followed her and young Lisburne into the refreshment-room, where a new band of music greeted their arrival. With a hesitating voice, and a face strongly characteristic of his feelings, his lordship solicited the honour

nour of becoming her partner for the next dance.

Ellen was going to decline; but his sister, who sat next her, said—"Do not refuse, my dear friend; Clarissa's choice of to-night shews so much caprice and ill-nature, that I feel perfectly exonerated from studying her pleasure any longer. Let Edwin therefore resume his former pleasing situation; and Clarissa will be reminded of the old saying of 'those who will not when they may—' you know the rest, Ellen."

Her friend smiled; and lord Edwin, overjoyed, placed himself by the side of his beautiful mistress.

He had just taken the hand of Ellen, to reconduct her to the lawn, when the marquis, who had vainly endeavoured to get rid of his partner, hastened towards them. "I see," said he, in a tone of evident vexation, "that I am arrived too late; the features of Edwin allow of

no hope for me. May I flatter myself, my dear Miss Woodville, that you will favour me when you are disengaged ?”

Ellen, with her usual sweetness, assured him that she would dance with him the next time.

The face of the marquis brightened ; he kissed her hand and retired.

Lord Mortimer was in high spirits ; his family had seldom seen him so lively as he now was ; he walked up and down the lawn, first with one and then with the other of the guests ; and his sister observed to her husband, that he looked ten years younger than he had done a week ago,

Courteney saw with pleasure the triumph of his pupil, as he led forth Ellen Woodville, and the increased displeasure of Miss Beaumont : he heard also of Ellen’s promise to the marquis with malignant satisfaction ; hoping, from his too evident admiration, to be able to draw forth the natural jealousy of his wife.

Miss

Miss Beaumont declined dancing for the present; and taking the ready arm of the hypocrite, chose a seat where they could observe the motions and looks of lord Edwin and his partner.

Clarissa saw the carnation on the fair cheek of her rival deepen, and she judged, from the melting softness visible in the eyes of her truant lover, that the tenderness of his feelings could only make choice of one subject to discourse on. She turned pale as death; and Courteney, who feared lest she should faint, soothed her by assurances that lord Edwin should still be hers, provided that she would but agree to be governed by him. He then conducted her into the house, where, after procuring some refreshment, he disclosed the purport of his plan, by which the innocent Ellen was to be disgraced in the opinion of the family, and herself finally become the wife of lord Edwin.

While this diabolical conversation was
passing

passing between Miss Beaumont and Courteney, Ellen was obliged to listen to the tender reproaches of her partner, who again assured her that it was impossible for him to love any other being than herself—that the conduct of Clarissa had disgusted him as a lover, and that it had weakened even the esteem he had always felt for her as the companion of his childhood.

“ Say, dearest Ellen, can a heart like yours wish me to devote the whole of my future life to a woman I cannot love, and with whom I must be miserable? the moment I first beheld you at the inn, that short interview convinced me that I was no longer master of my affections; I pined in secret, with the fear of not being able to discover you—all my former pleasures ceased to please—I grew restless and unhappy—and, when occasion offered, rambled from place to place, in hopes of finding out your abode. I was thus employed when you arrived at
my

my mother's ; and I was returning, wretched and disappointed, to the very home which contained my soul's dearest treasure. Oh, Ellen, and was I thus permitted again to behold you, to live under the same roof, only to become the object of your scorn ?”

“ You are my *friend*,” replied Ellen ; “ let that sacred name assure you of my good wishes.”

“ Lovely girl ! tell me by what tender artifice I may convert that sacred name into one still dearer ? Oh, Ellen, I would sacrifice my existence to be blest one day with thy undivided love !”

Ellen felt her heart throb quicker than usual ; the music, the dance, the charming scenery around her, the persuasive looks, and tender voice of lord Edwin, all conspired to soften and to betray her affections. They were standing at the bottom of the dance, her hand was pressed gently in that of lord Edwin ; a more handsome, a more seducing form, could

could not have been placed before her ; Ellen found her firmness, her resolution yielding ; and lord Edwin felt her tremble, and saw the varying colour on her cheek, as she vainly endeavoured to avoid his eloquent and impassioned gaze.

“ Say, lovely Ellen, one word of comfort to an unfortunate, who, doting to madness, yet dares not hope to inspire reciprocal feelings ! Ellen, my sweetest love, were I but free to solicit the envied blessing of this soft hand, were I but licensed to adore you, would you, as now, refuse to listen to me ? or may I cherish the presumptuous thought of being capable of rendering myself worthy to be beloved by *you* ? Oh, Ellen, if you knew the ecstasy which dwells in that idea—in the bare possibility of being the object *capable* of inspiring you with a love like my own, you would not hesitate to acknowledge what would render me blest indeed ! ”

The company now began to return to
the

the house, and Ellen motioned to follow them.

Lord Edwin gently detained her—
“ Answer me, my sweet Ellen : oh, why so tardy in complying with the request of one who would fain live but for you ? ”

“ How, my lord, can I reply to your question,” said Ellen, greatly embarrassed, “ without violating the native delicacy of my sex ? of what importance is it to you, who are destined to become the husband of another, whether my heart, if permitted, to make its own election, would refuse or accept the offer of yours ? Let us return, my lord, I beseech of you ; and at least be convinced, that if I did not highly esteem you, I should not feel thus agitated from being obliged to remind you that your engagements render it improper for me to listen to you again on the same subject.”

The voice, the manner, the unintentionally tender look of Ellen, betrayed what she wished for ever to be concealed.

Lord

Lord Edwin felt their power ; he felt also that he was not the object of her indifference or scorn, but of her love ; pressing, therefore, her hand rapturously to his lips, he led her into the Castle, where she was met by his sister and Adolphus Beaumont ; the former took the arm of Ellen, and their partners mixed among the crowd.

“ Do I look happy ? ” asked her ladyship ; “ I think I must ; I knew that my system was a good one, and that, however Adolphus might for a time pay homage to the rising sun, yet eventually he would be contented with one of its satellites.”

“ What do you mean, my dear lady Caroline ? you certainly look more than usually cheerful ; but may I inquire what has occasioned it ? ”

“ You shall know all when we are alone, Ellen ; at present I shall only say, that Adolphus is my very humble servant,
my

my true and faithful slave, and that I am in the best temper imaginable. I really believe, if the truant was to ask me to run away with him to Gretna-Green, that I should be infinitely too good-natured to refuse him."

Ellen smiled, and pressing affectionately the hand of her friend, said—"My dearest lady Caroline, merit, beauty, and liberality of soul, such as yours, cannot fail to secure, in the firmest manner, the heart of a lover, since you possess so entirely those of your friends."

"Ah, flatterer!" cried her ladyship, "how easily can I prove the fallacy of your opinion! look at the sullen, discontented Clarissa, the companion of my early years; tell me what traces are there in her countenance of our former kindness? yet I will not murmur, since, if I have lost one friend, I have gained another in Ellen Woodville, who, I may proudly boast, is every thing that I could

could wish, either as a sister or a friend."

At the name of sister, the blood rushed into the face and neck of Ellen.

"Ah, sly one," said lady Caroline, gaily, "I am much mistaken if you would quarrel with the gipsey now, were a part of her prophecy to come true. Have you any dislike, Ellen, to the letter W? perhaps it would be more agreeable with an E placed before it? but see, where the marquis hastens towards us; God help us! it is a sad thing, after all, to be more than commonly handsome, since even young married men will stray from the side of their wives."

"Caroline," said her brother, taking an arm of each, "the earl requests your attendance in the ball-room;" then turning to Ellen, "may I hope that you will not be too much fatigued to favour me with your hand the ensuing dances? Lisburne is seeking you all over the lawn—but I shall rely upon your promise."

Ellen

Ellen consented, and yet she would willingly have excused herself; the hint of lord Edwin, and the looks of the marquis, made her feel uncomfortable if she chanced to be alone with him; yet she could not deny his request without betraying that such were her sentiments.

Lady Caroline now quitted them, to join her uncle; and the marquis exultingly led his partner to where the sets were forming. Miss Beaumont was walking with the marchioness, when Ellen and her companion passed; Jemima nodded affectionately to Ellen, then turning to Clarissa, said—"How lovely that dear girl looks to-night! her countenance is so perfectly emblematical of her mind, that if ever I am inclined to be nervous, the sight of it instantly restores me to serenity."

"May it never prove otherwise than pleasing to you, my dear marchioness!" replied Miss Beaumont; "but *I*, who have suffered so severely from her beauty,

ty,

ty, cannot join with you in praising the tranquillizing effects of her features: to me, who have lost the heart of Lord Edwin through her artifices and her charms, the sight of her produces far different emotions."

"My dear Clarissa, you injure my friend deeply, by giving way to such ungenerous suspicions; the soul of Ellen is as free from blemish as her form: I am confident that she would be the last girl in the world to seduce Edwin from your society."

"Oh that you may never have cause to lament your blind partiality," said Miss Beaumont; "or to regret, when too late, your own credulity and want of judgment, in throwing such a strong temptation in the way of the young and impetuous marquis!"

"The marquis!" hastily exclaimed his wife; "Heavens, Clarissa! are you not contented with wishing to prove my friend but too susceptible to the virtues

of Edwin? must you brand her also with the detestable name of a coquette, and of the worst kind, were she capable of trifling with a married man, and that man the husband of one who loves her? Oh, how can you suffer yourself to be guilty of such cruel injustice? how can you wish to calumniate a girl like Ellen, who never, during the whole time that I have known her, committed one action, or said one word, that I could find occasion to censure?"

"My opinion of her was *once* nearly as favourable as yours," replied Clarissa. "You err, however, if you think that I am the only person who sees and trembles for the consequences of Miss Woodville's duplicity; there is one whose name, did I but dare to utter it, would stamp my words with truth. Ah, my dear marchioness, you cannot be more unwilling than I was to believe any thing unfavourable of Ellen; but my kind and friendly monitor warned me
against

against my foolish confidence in the innocency of her appearance. Convinced at length of what gave me indescribable pain, I am desirous to save you from becoming another dupe, from losing, as I have done, the affection of him I considered as my future husband. Turn your eyes, dear Jemima, on the animated countenance of the marquis; see how he gazes on the blushing face of the seemingly artless Ellen! are those the looks which *your* husband ought to bestow, or *your* friend receive? My dear marchioness, how you tremble!—sit down—shall I fetch you any thing? for God's sake recover yourself, or you will betray what nothing but my regard for you should have tempted me to disclose."

The marchioness was wounded in the only vulnerable place. No power on earth could have shaken her confidence in Ellen's candour and sincerity; even now she doubted whether *she* was to blame; but she saw enough in the ad-

miring eyes of her husband to alarm her suspicions, and excite her jealousy.

“ I am extremely faint, Clarissa,” said the marchioness; “ let us retire to the coffee-room. Do not be alarmed—I will not mention to any human being what you have just told me.”

Miss Beaumont now conducted the trembling wife of the marquis to the refreshment chamber; they sat down on one of the couches, where they might converse more freely. Courteney, who had watched their movements, and by whose advice Clarissa had thus began his plan on the marchioness, now joined them, and expressed his fears that the latter had over-fatigued herself. Unable to reply to him, she burst into tears, and confessed that her agitation proceeded from her mind.

Leopold artfully placed himself by her side, and looking at Clarissa, said—
“ Alas! I dread to inquire the cause; I fear lest this amiable and too confiding
angel

angel has seen what we have long known."

The marchioness rose hastily, and leaning on the arm of the HYPOCRITE, followed by Miss Beaumont, went into one of the private apartments.

"Oh, Mr. Courteney!" said the agitated wife of the marquis, "and do *you*, who are all goodness and benevolence, do *you* believe that Ellen Woodville is capable of trifling with the peace and happiness of her friend? Speak, my dear sir! on your word depends my only hope; *you* cannot be deceived, since neither envy nor disappointed love can influence *your* decision."

"Compose yourself, I beseech you, madam," replied Leopold. "This is not a fit hour for such a subject; to-morrow I will attend your pleasure; recover yourself, therefore, lest your absence should excite alarm; and let this thought console you, that should the marquis be seduced, for awhile, by the allurements

of *her* you have so highly valued, and so generously made your equal, it is not too late, thank Heaven ! to take proper measures to wean him from his fatal passion, to separate him from its object, and to prevent the total estrangement of his love from yourself, who alone is entitled to possess it. Cheer up, dear madam ; I am ready and willing to hazard every thing to serve you, and only beg that you will endeavour to conceal your present inquietude ; to-morrow we will converse at large on this unpleasant subject. The heart of the marquis is yours *at present*, it is only his senses that are misled."

The marchioness, by the advice of Clarissa and her counsellor, returned to the company, just as the servant announced the duke of Fitz-Aubin.

Lord Mortimer, surprised and pleased, received his grace with great respect, and introduced him to the marchioness, in honour of whom the *fête* was designed ;

ed ; he then led him on the lawn, where the rest of his family were not tardy in shewing their esteem.

“ I hope lady Caroline is well ? ” said the duke ; “ I consider as a misfortune my being so long unknown to her.”

“ The misfortune is hers,” replied the earl. “ In a few minutes, however, I shall have the pleasure of presenting to you my niece ; your grace honoured her with a considerable share of your attention, when she was too young to know its value.”

“ The dance was now concluded ; ” and the marquis, unwilling to resign his partner, was advancing slowly to where his uncle and the duke were standing. His movements were quickened by a look from the earl, who, taking the hand of Ellen, desired his nephew to seek lady Caroline ; he then introduced his trembling little favourite to the exalted friend of Althea and her Edmund.

Ellen felt so excessively agitated at

the touch of his grace, that she with difficulty kept herself from fainting. Ashamed of her own folly, she timidly raised her eyes to the face of the duke, and discovered that *his* were fixed on *her*, with an expression of mingled curiosity and admiration.

Nothing certainly could exceed the loveliness of her present appearance, which the elegant simplicity of her attire shewed to every advantage. She wore, like the rest of the ladies of the Castle, a white satin short dress, trimmed at the bottom with ivy leaves, green body and sleeves, with a narrow puffing of lace round the bosom of the former, and the bottom of the latter, which were made so as to shew rather more of the white and polished arm than met with her approbation; the body sat tight to the beautiful form of Ellen, and discovered the graceful swell of her fair bosom, which she tried to conceal, by adding another flower to the nosegay which belonged

belonged to her dress ; it was the same as all the rest, and consisted of a moss rose-bud, a sprig of half-blown geranium and myrtle ; to these Ellen added a small bunch of the lilies of the valley, which shaded the powerful charm that others, less delicate, too willingly exposed. On her head she wore a small chip hat, with a wreath of ivy, and tied under the chin with white ribbons ; her pale yellow hair fell in glossy ringlets over her forehead, and played upon her downy cheek, which the exercise she had just quitted had tinged with a deeper glow than usual ; white satin shoes, with small rosettes of green bugles, finished her dress.

Simple and unadorned, Ellen Woodville stood before the duke of Fitz-Aubin, whose countenance manifested an equal agitation with her own ; he strove in vain to take off his eyes from the fascinating girl, who had thus surprised and charmed him by a combination of natu-

ral beauties. Lady Caroline appeared; and the duke, as he met her, thought he discovered the same features and the same good-nature that had pleased him so much in her childhood.

Gratified in her wish of beholding his grace, and solicitous to please him, lady Caroline, like her friend, never appeared to better advantage. Passing her arm through that of Ellen, she convinced his grace, by the affection of her manner in addressing her, that she was the favourite friend of lady Caroline.

They now proceeded to the supper-rooms, the tables of which were covered with every luxury that gold can purchase, and set out with great taste and beauty. During the repast the musicians in the antichamber played several fine pieces of music, selected for the occasion by lady Caroline, who, seated between Ellen and Adolphus Beaumont, seemed a perfect picture of good-humour and contentment.

Ellen,

Ellen, who had instantly recognized in the duke the noble stranger that accompanied Deloraine to the tomb of the countess, felt her eyes attracted, every now and then, to the spot where he sat; each time she encountered his fixed on herself, yet the expression did not displease her; it was that of melancholy tenderness, of admiration so chaste that it excited in her own bosom the most new and pleasing emotions.

“How I could love the duke! how I could worship him!” said she, in reply to a speech of lady Caroline’s.

“Hey, hey!” exclaimed her ladyship; “what is all this, Ellen? I do not remember a word about your being a duchess! the gipsey did say something of your becoming a great lady, I think, but not a syllable that should encourage your idolatry.”

Ellen laughed—“Dearest lady Caroline, I verily believe that you put faith in the prophecy of the sibyl; but do

not be alarmed ; the feelings which have led me to speak so warmly are not those of love—I cannot well describe them, yet I think they are such as I should entertain for the duke were he my brother ; and yet they are different from what I feel for Theodore.”

“ Yes, yes, it is mighty well !” replied her good-natured friend, smilingly ; “ you have fallen desperately in love with the duke, (who, by-the-bye, is near forty, and therefore old enough to be your father,) and, after having confessed as much, you now want to retract your words—but it will not do, Ellen.”

“ What will not do, Caroline ?” inquired lord Edwin.

“ Oh, nothing very particular—only Ellen is mightily captivated by the manly and handsome person of the duke of Fitz-Aubin, and I was advising her——” the approach of her uncle, and the subject of her conversation, silenced her raillery ; but she had said enough to
alarm

alarm the tenderness of her brother, and to bring to his remembrance the words of his tutor.

“ Caroline,” said lord Mortimer, “ the duke of Fitz-Aubin requests me to solicit your hand, should you be disengaged.”

Her ladyship most willingly complied.

“ May I venture to ask,” said the duke, “ if Miss Woodville will condescend to accept of me for the next, after the present ?”

“ Your grace does me infinite honour,” was the reply of Ellen, as she curtsied gracefully.

The duke now led his smiling partner to the ball-room, as it was deemed unwise to dance any longer in the open air. He could not refrain from praising the tasteful decorations which surrounded him, and learnt that they were chiefly designed by Ellen, by that sweet girl who had so instantaneously captivated him. In the course of conversation with
lady

lady Caroline, he discovered who she was; and his good opinion of her ladyship was greatly increased by the generous ardour she displayed in recapitulating the talents and virtues of her favourite.

Charmed by the candour and liberality of his fair partner, the duke nevertheless longed for the moment when he should obtain Ellen's promised hand. She, meanwhile, had declined dancing with young Lisburne, that she might acquit herself with more credit with the duke.

Lord Edwin was by no means satisfied with this arrangement, although it gave him the opportunity of sitting beside her, and of conversing upon what topic he pleased; yet Ellen could think of, could see only the duke; her mind naturally reverted to scenes before she was in existence; the beautiful daughter of the earl, the injured Deloraine, and the godlike friend of both, occupied by
turns

turns her thoughts; and she was frequently so absorbed in her own reflections, that she heard not the tender, reproachful voice of lord Edwin, who, weary with endeavouring to secure her attention, at length became silent, and Ellen enjoyed at liberty her varied ideas.

When his grace felt himself authorized to seek her, and had yielded up his agreeable partner to the care of Adolphus, he hurried to the place where he had perceived her to be seated, by the side of the earl's youngest nephew. In passing through the crowd, his ear caught the following words:—‘Do not despair of success; all is favourable to our wishes; her disgrace is inevitable, in spite of the blind fondness of lady Caroline.’ They fell from Courteney, who was addressing Miss Beaumont, in one of those whispers that go much further than is intended.

The duke knew him again, and felt his
choler

choler rise as the MODERN JANUS bowed with all imaginable humility when he passed ; not doubting for a moment that the person whose disgrace, perhaps ruin, was thus meditated by the treacherous friend of Deloraine, could be no other than the lovely and interesting favourite of lady Caroline, whom he was now approaching, he felt alarmed as the idea crossed his mind ; how was that helpless and innocent creature to escape the villany of him who had deceived the penetrating Deloraine ? how was she to escape the machinations of one old in dissimulation ? perhaps, stranger as he was, a hint from him might put her on her guard, might eventually save her from his power.

Lord Edwin rose at his approach, and, bowing respectfully, resigned his seat, and retired.

Ellen would have risen also, but was withheld by the same unaccountable feelings,

ings, which increased as the duke took her hand in his. She felt his hand tremble.

“ Pardon me, dear Miss Woodville,” said his grace, “ but there is some secret charm in your person that has awakened in my bosom sensations long since buried in the grave ; it is the more mysterious, as you are in no way related to this family ; neither do you resemble the beloved being for whose sake I have forsworn all the endearments of conjugal affection. Until this evening I have viewed unmoved the most finished beauties ; they had not power to affect my heart, or warm my imagination ; how singular then that I should so suddenly, and, as if by magic, almost instantaneously, feel inclined to devote myself to *your* service ! some secret impulse seems to attach me to your side, and I shall quit it with a regret that I have not experienced for many years. But what can thus agitate *you*, lovely Miss Woodville ?

let

let not the candour of a stranger alarm your delicacy ; my feelings, although inexplicable to myself, are such as need not call a blush upon your cheek ; they have prompted me, I own, to avow more than our short acquaintance warrants ; yet my soul springs towards you, as if we had been known to each other for years ; its feelings will not be restrained by the common forms of etiquette and civility : do not tremble thus, I entreat you."

"I hope your grace will excuse me," replied Ellen, in a low, sweet voice, that thrilled through the heart of Fitz-Aubin ; "I confess that I feel more than I can express, or account for ; my sensations seem in unison with those of your grace, and must arise from my being acquainted with the melancholy fate of the amiable countess, and your exalted friendship, your matchless affection to the husband she idolized ; it must be this knowledge, and the remembrance of those
painful.

painful trials you were fated to endure for her sake, which renders the sight of your grace so highly gratifying. Pardon me, I conjure you;" feeling him tremble violently, "for having thus innocently renewed your uneasiness. Let my youth and inexperience plead for me with your grace."

Ellen's blue eyes were filled with tears. She longed to tell the duke how much she admired him for the part he had taken in the sorrows of the countess; yet she thought, she feared she had already said too much.

"Lovely, fascinating creature!" exclaimed the duke; "by Heavens, I know not how to define my feelings! I thought them buried in the untimely tomb of Althea; I find them alive in all their wonted vigour, as I gaze on your heavenly countenance, as I hear the melodious and angelic tones of your voice. Blest spirit of my sainted friend!" he continued, "let not my present strange emotions

emotions violate the sanctity of my oath—and yet for this sweet girl how readily would I relinquish my existence!” He pressed the hand of Ellen passionately to his lips. “Let us join the company,” said he, “dear Miss Woodville; our absence may give occasion for the malice of unfriendly tongues. Beauty such as yours must prepare to guard against many attacks of envy and hypocrisy.”

The dance had already began, and Ellen was but little inclined to join in it; she felt, however, the necessity of combating against her feelings, which made her suspect that all eyes were upon her and her noble partner. During the intervals of their resting, the duke questioned her with great delicacy upon her family, and the nature of those ties which seemed to connect her so closely with that of the earl. With the same delicacy he cautioned her against putting too much confidence in the seeming humility,

ty, devotion, and sincerity of Courteney.

“ I must see you again,” said the duke; “ I feel that our intimacy will not end with to-night. Beware of him who betrayed his best friend, the noble, the generous-hearted Deloraine !”

Ellen started, as if she had received an unseen stab.

“ Be on your guard, dear Miss Woodville, until I have the happiness of seeing you again ; I will then explain my meaning, and what has given rise to my present caution. We are watched ; the jealous eyes of lord Edwin betray his uneasiness at my attentions : he is a pupil of Leopold Courteney’s—God send that he may have escaped the poisonous contagion of his lessons and his counsels ! his looks are highly prepossessing, and I will no longer be the means of disturbing his repose. Dearest Miss Woodville, let my caution sink deep in your mind—do not forget Fitz-Aubin.”

“ Never,

“ Never, never can I forget you,” thought Ellen, as she saw him mix among the retiring groups.

Lord Edwin took her hand ; she was pale, and evidently much fatigued ; his displeasure vanished, his tenderness returned, and he affectionately supported her to the couch on which his sister was sitting.

The morning was now far advanced, and those of the company who did not sleep at the Castle rapidly dispersed. The earl had requested that the duke would do him the honour to accept a bed ; but this he politely declined, promising, however, to call on the earl before he quitted the Lodge ; then taking leave of the family, he moved forward to where lady Caroline and Ellen were seated ; and kissing a hand of each, proceeded to his carriage, much against the wish and advice of lord Mortimer, who very justly concluded, that a journey of rather better than twenty miles must be
harrassing

harrassing to one already weary with the fatiguing amusement of a ball.

Lady Caroline and her favourite were not sorry to enjoy the welcome quiet of Ellen's bed-room. They were too completely exhausted to talk, and therefore deferred questioning each other until their strength and spirits were recruited by several hours comfortable and necessary repose.

The marchioness, for the first time since her nuptials, retired to her chamber with a heavy heart. She had exerted herself to her utmost, in compliance with the wishes of Courteney, and she longed most ardently, yet fearfully, for the ensuing morning, which was to give her an explanation of what was most essential to her future peace. But *he* who was thus wantonly sporting with her feelings, and injuring, in the cruellest manner, an amiable and innocent girl, sacredly committed to his care, exultingly threw himself on his bed, rejoicing in
the

the almost certain success of his plans, which must eventually, and that at a period not far distant, throw into his power the once adored but now hateful form of Ellen Woodville.

CHAP. IV.

THE visit of the duke of Fitz-Aubin, which had so agreeably surprised lord Mortimer, arose more from a curiosity that had been highly excited by the artless praises of honest Jem Homely, than from any desire to renew his former connexion with the earl.

When Deloraine arrived at the hunting lodge of the duke, he gave Jem leave to go to the farm, and to remain there until the time fixed on for their departure.

Jem had caught a glimpse of lady Caroline

roline and her beautiful friend, the morning they came to the farm, to fetch Susan's little boy; charmed by their appearance, and the engaging affability of their manners, Jem could not avoid mentioning them to his master, the next time he rode over to the Lodge. The description he gave of Ellen's beauties determined the duke to accept the invitation of lord Mortimer, which would enable him to judge whether Jem had over-rated the persons of lady Caroline and Miss Woodville.

On the duke's return from the ball, Deloraine was not a little astonished to find him perfectly enchanted with the little girl who had made so deep an impression on his faithful servant. Never, since the death of their mutually-beloved countess, had he seen his friend thus moved by the influence of female beauty; he could not, therefore, refrain from rallying him upon his being once more enslaved.

“ My dear Fitz-Aubin, I perceive,” said he, with a melancholy smile, “ has at length discovered a being perfect enough to entice him from his long-kept resolution of eternal celibacy.”

“ You injure my undiminished adoration,” replied the duke ; “ the constancy of my mind remains unshaken ; yet I *have seen*, have conversed with one who, I confess, is calculated to fill the void in my heart, and to supply the place of her so long and so deservedly lamented by us both. Nay, Edmund, frown not ; you know me too well to doubt the *justness* of my praise. Never, by Heaven ! will I violate the vow sacred to the love I bore our Althea ! never will I tarnish the holiness of my attachment, by yielding to a second ! The feelings which the sight of this lovely girl gave birth to are so strange, so new, so delicious, that I seem to worship again our adored countess, and my heart springs towards this interesting stranger, as if she possessed a
strong,

strong, a sacred claim to my affections. Yet Ellen Woodville does not resemble the object of my first-love ; her eyes are the finest blue I ever beheld, and her skin is as white as the purest marble ; every movement of her graceful form seems to increase the delicate bloom on her cheek ; no tongue, however eloquent, can portray the nameless witcheries that hover round her person, that lurk in the silken ringlets of her yellow hair, and sport around her dimpled mouth : but her smile ! oh, Edmund, her heavenly smile is calculated to charm away the fiercest grief, to ‘ take the imprisoned soul, and lap it in Elysium !’ You must see Ellen Woodville, to decide on the emotions she has inspired.”

“ You have raised my curiosity to a painful height,” replied the fond husband of the sainted countess ; “ I shall be uneasy till I have beheld the object worthy of being compared to my lost Althea. Yet, my friend, how can I ob-

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tain

tain a sight of this enchanting girl? I have sworn never to enter the Castle of lord Mortimer, unless he could restore to me one or both of the dear treasures he has destroyed."

"We will go privately to the farm," replied the duke; "Jem said that lady Caroline and her friend were in the habit of calling there frequently; from the window of your room we shall have a good view of them, as they advance to the house; and we are already well assured that dame Homely is an exception to the rule, 'a woman cannot keep a secret.' I am still more anxious to have another interview with Miss Woodville; some words dropped from Courteney (who still continues with the family) to a lady, who seemed to view the sweet girl with no friendly eye, have awakened all my fears for her safety."

Deloraine started; the warm blush of rekindled anger tinged his cheek.

"I wish to put her on her guard
against

against his hypocrisy," continued the duke. "Heaven only knows what disappointed hopes may have given rise to his fatal enmity ; the villain who could abandon to starvation a worthy wife and helpless family, and who was the base and cowardly seducer of Susan Homely, is capable of putting in force the most diabolical plan to ensnare and ruin the innocent and unsuspecting Ellen ; far from her home, and the protection of her relations, what may not the malignity of the hypocrite effect ? I feel as deeply interested in the fate of this sweet girl as if she were my own, and will only wait the arrival of letters from my sister to hasten with you to the farm."

Deloraine readily agreed to the proposal of the duke. Change of scene was always pleasing to him ; many years had elapsed since the death of his beloved Althea, and he still continued to ramble from place to place, sometimes accompanied by his uncle, the worthy doctor

Bennet, and sometimes by the duke of Fitz-Aubin. Time had not blunted the poignancy of his feeling, or diminished the tenderness he felt for the memory of his wife ; her picture was still the companion of his bosom, and the object of his daily contemplation ; nor had he once neglected to pay his annual visit to her tomb, even when the state of his own health was such as to render the journey a dangerous one.

Such praise as the duke had bestowed on Ellen Woodville made Deloraine restless and impatient to gain a sight of her, which was increased by the suspicions of his grace respecting Courteney's probable malignancy. He knew too well the general perfidiousness of Leopold's conduct towards women, and he trembled at the bare possibility that the lovely stranger might be one of those whom Courteney intended to dishonour.

Deloraine, in his own mind, had no doubt of the real cause of poor Susan's elopement.

elopement. Several years since he had, in consequence of a letter from Maria, (filled with revilings against her brother-in-law, who had totally abandoned his family for some time) travelled to London, with the benevolent intention of doing something to relieve them effectually from the wretchedness of their situation. He visited them at their new lodgings, and to his utter surprise and dismay, saw Susan Homely, the artless and once innocent daughter of the hospitable farmer.

The amazement of Susan could only equal his: she besought him, on her knees, not to betray to her parents that he had seen her. This he promised, when he found that all his arguments, advice, and persuasions, were tried in vain, to get her to return to them. She told him her melancholy tale, but most faithfully did she conceal the name of her seducer. Deloraine, however, drew from her simple narrative his own conclusions;

and he resolved to snatch these devoted victims from the miserable destiny to which Courteney had abandoned them.

He proposed to Sybella to take her two surviving boys entirely under his care, to educate and bring up to whatever profession or business they might make choice of. In order to prevent her being again compelled to reside in a neighbourhood similar to that she was now in, he entreated that he might be permitted to seek a more comfortable and respectable place of abode, and proposed that she and her sister should try to establish a day-school; to enable them to do which, he presented her with a check from his uncle for fifty pounds.

Sybella and her sister, in spite of his efforts to restrain them, flung themselves on their knees before him; their tears and prayers affected him sensibly. Affectionately raising them, he entreated them to moderate the transports of their gratitude, since the only pleasure he
could

could *now* receive in this world must arise from his ability to relieve the sorrows of those whose misfortunes were not irremediable. "If," said he, "my dear friends, there is any other mode of living more consonant to your wishes, speak, and I will do every thing in my power to make it attainable."

Sybella, after she had recovered her voice, expressed a fear that her health and spirits had suffered too severely to allow of her attending to the education of youth ; she wished also to do a something that would enable Susan to continue with her, and thought they might succeed very well by opening a little shop, and selling their own work, in one of the villages near town. As it was one of Deloraine's principal objects to establish poor Susan with the worthy and ill-treated wife of his enemy, he immediately agreed to her plan, advising her, however, to keep the place of her removal a secret from the people of the

house, lest her husband, from no *good* motive, should discover her intended retreat.

Scarce waiting to take the refreshment which Maria had fetched him, Deloraine, impatient to remove them from their humble lodgings, got into a hackney-coach, and drove to Camberwell. Here he was fortunate enough to find a small, pleasant house, decently furnished, with a good garden, and in an eligible situation for the sale of millinery and haberdashery; the woman to whom it belonged was going into another line of business, and the stock she had on hand was to be disposed of on reasonable terms.

Deloraine thought this was just what Sybella would like; he therefore took her and Maria the next day to see the premises, and to judge of the goods. Joy and unexpected happiness chained their tongues; but Deloraine, who watched the expression of their countenances, saw enough to authorize him to settle
finally

finally with the woman of the house; her lease had to run five years, and Deloraine, in order to secure for that time at least Sybella's peaceable possession, gave her an order on his banker for the sum, including the goods and furniture, which he now presented to Mrs. Courteney as her own.

To this healthy and pleasant abode they most joyfully retired in less than a week; and Deloraine had the inexpressible satisfaction of seeing them comfortably settled in the respectable situation he had procured for them. Thus was the gentle and patient wife of Leopold beholden to the man whom he had so basely traduced, so cruelly injured, for every comfort in existence.

Mistress once again of a decent house of her own, prettily furnished, and a stock of excellent articles for sale, in a genteel neighbourhood, which afforded plenty of custom, rent free for five years, and a bill of fifty pounds to begin

with, Sybella now looked forward to a renewal of those comforts she had always known, before she became the wife of Leopold. She, as well as her sister, had a taste for millinery, and they had the satisfaction to find that their first attempts were sold off almost as soon as they were exposed to view; they therefore fitted up their front apartment, on the first floor, as a shew-room, which was quickly resorted to by the ladies of the place, who, pleased by the manners and appearance of the sisters, preferred their house to that of any other.

Susan, as well as the sister of Sybella, had experienced, in the most delicate manner, the generosity of Deloraine. The former continued to work, and assist in the domestic concerns, as much beloved by them as ever, until chance conducted to the village in which she lived the lover of Susan, the only son of the miller, whom she had rejected, on becoming acquainted with the hypocrite.

Susan

Susan was purchasing some articles of provision, when Ralph Benson, who had come up to London about some corn, passed by the shop in which she was standing. The features of his beloved Susan were too well known to the miller for him to doubt the truth of his eyes; he saw her quit the shop, but his heart was too full to speak; he therefore followed her home, and after recovering from his first surprise, mustered up courage to enter the house, and inquire of Sybella if he might see one Susan Homely?

At the sound of her own name, and in a country voice, poor Susan, who was in a back-parlour, screamed and fainted.

Sybella, followed by Ralph, ran to her assistance, and soon recovered her.

The honest affection of Benson knew no bounds to its joy; he cried like a child one minute, then swore the next—
“That if so be as Susan could like him,
he

he would never part with her, now that he had found her !”

Susan was much agitated ; her heart had always been favourable to Ralph before she listened to the treacherous voice of Courteney ; but now that she had become a victim to his artifices, she could not look the worthy miller in the face.

Sybella now saw the favourable opportunity arrived of restoring Susan to her parents, and yet preserving her character, and she resolved to try if the love of Ralph would abide the knowledge of her misfortune. She invited him to dine and spend the day with them ; then taking Susan aside, she asked her if she could live happily with her old lover, who, she doubted not, would forgive a crime not of her own seeking, conceal it from the world, marry her, and restore her to the arms of her afflicted parents ? if she thought she could be happy with him, she would herself undertake to disclose

close the fatal error of the too confiding victim of her husband's baseness.

Susan confessed that she could live very happily with Ralph, but that she did not think any man would excuse so great a fault ; besides, her seduction had been attended with a repetition of the crime, which lay on her heart like a weight of lead.

“ Dear Susan ! ” said Sybella, “ I know the innate goodness of that heart which feels so keenly for the past ; I am convinced of your penitence, of your return to virtue, and therefore there is no occasion to wound the ear of your lover with more than what was the fatal origin of all ; let him suppose, that as soon as you were abandoned by your seducer, you maintained yourself by your needle. Thank God he has discovered you under my protection, and not in want of any comfort ! Leave the affair to me, my dear Susan ; you retire after dinner, and I will answer that, in less than two months,

months, you shall be restored to your parents, and your misfortune known only to your husband."

Susan, obedient to the advice of her generous friend, took an opportunity of leaving her and young Benson alone.

The miller, who had sense enough to discover the regard manifested by Sybella and Maria for Susan, immediately began the subject nearest his heart; he depicted, in plain but affecting language, the deep affliction her elopement had occasioned him and her parents, and added, that they still continued to mourn after their child; and that, for him, he was sure he never could think of any other woman, whether Susan would have him or not.

Sybella thought this a fit time to try the strength and constancy of Ralph's affection. She began by highly praising the good qualities of Susan, and regretting that her parents had suffered her to quit home, for so exposed a situation as
that

that of lady Wilmington's town house—a situation by no means proper for so young and handsome a girl as Susan, who was perfectly ignorant of all the arts of the Londoners.

Ralph agreed to this—"I was sorely afeard," said he, "that poor Sue would repent the day she saw Lunnun streets; and as they knew very well that I was fond on her, and coud carry her home to as good a house as theirs, I didn't take it over and above kind of them, the letting her come to Lunnun. Poor girl! it must have been a bad thing indeed that could make her hide away from us all this while; but I don't care for that, nor for any thing, nor for any of 'em; if Sue likes me, as she once did, I will have her now, in spite of all that she may have done wrong; I know she is a good girl at bottom, and an honest heart, and the devil take me if I will leave her, if so be that she will have me!"

Sybella could not help taking the
hand

hand of the faithful Ralph, and pressing it warmly in her own ; she then recounted as much as was necessary of poor Susan's fate, and her inability to visit her native place, and see her parents and relations, after what had happened.

The tears rolled down the cheeks of Ralph, at the affecting narration of Sybella ; and when he was a little composed, he begged to see Susan. Mrs. Courteney supported the blushing and agitated girl into the presence of her lover, who eagerly caught her in his arms, and both sobbed as if their hearts would break.

“ Don't cry, Susan,” said Ralph, who spoke first, “ don't cry ; I know all, and I love you better for the misery you have gone through ! May the smooth-tongued rascal that could promise to marry, and could then betray thee, never know a moment's peace again ! Never mind, my poor dear girl ; Ralph Benson will have thee after all, will marry thee directly, and take thee down to the farm, where

where they shall never be a bit the wiser from him. Hold up your head, Sue; nobody shall look queer at you; I'll buy the mill about five miles beyond Dupree's farm, and there we'll live as happy as the days are long."

Susan, overpowered by the kindness and nobleness of soul thus displayed by her rustic lover, could hardly refrain from disclosing the whole of her unhappy situation, on being compelled to resort to the dreadful way of living in which she was found by Sybella; yet recollecting that the affection of Ralph would still induce him to marry her, and that by so doing she would only unnecessarily wound him more deeply, she resolved to be guided by the prudent counsels of Sybella, who likewise advised that her parents should be led to suppose that she had been enticed away from lady Wilmington, but not ruined; and that she had subsisted ever since on the fruits of her own industry, ashamed

to

to return to her home, after running away from the family in which they had placed her.

Ralph expressed the liveliest gratitude for the kindness shewn to his Susan, and requested that, as she had so generously employed her in her adversity, she would let them keep their wedding at her house, giving her at the same time a note of ten pounds, to buy the dinner and supper, and begging that she would keep the remainder for a pair of gloves.

In the course of a week Susan was well stocked with clothes; and, on the Sunday following, Ralph procured a licence, and they were married at the village-church, Sybella and Maria attending, with countenances which bespoke the pleasure they felt in thus witnessing the good-fortune of an amiable and deserving object.

Ralph and his bride were accommodated with a chamber in Sybella's house, during their stay in town, which was not

to exceed ten days, the miller being anxious to have the introduction of Susan to her disconsolate parents over as soon as possible.

The happy change in Susan's circumstances did not diminish either her gratitude or affection for the friends who had rescued her from misery. She was at a loss how to bestow some little mark of her attachment, more lasting than money, of which, thanks to the benevolence of Deloraine, her friend was not in so much need; she therefore applied to her husband, who, kissing her fondly, told her to buy what she liked best; and as they were going to chuse some articles for themselves at a silversmith's in town, she might see something which would suit her friends.

Susan, therefore, made choice of a neat time-piece, which she placed over Sybella's fire-place; it was both ornamental and useful; and, after Mrs. Courteney had praised her taste, she smilingly

ly desired her to accept it, as a trifling remembrance of one who would always love and reverence her while she existed. To Maria she presented a dozen of teaspoons, and a silver milk-pot; then recollecting that Sybella had no table-spoons, she gave her a couple of her own, telling her that she should keep her well supplied with butter, cheese, bacon, and poultry, which she would get conveyed to her by every opportunity.

Sybella and Maria saw their affectionate companion to the stage, which was to convey her once more to her native village. They all shed tears at parting; and Ralph, who felt his own eyes moisten, promised to bring his wife with him, whenever he came to Lunnun again; then embracing them kindly, he proceeded with Susan to the house of his father.

The worthy old miller received her with every demonstration of joy, and applauded his son for what he had done. Ralph, the next morning, lifted Susan
into

into his little chaise, and bidding her have a good heart, left her in the lane close to her father's farm.

"Well, honest Ralph," said the farmer, "thou art come back, I see, from Lunnun; any tidings of my poor lost daughter? God have mercy on us! I fear she is dead, and we shall never see her more!"

"I don't know that," cried Ralph; "but I picked up a wife in Lunnun, and I brought her down to father, who is main fond of her."

"Married, Ralph!" exclaimed both the father and mother of Susan; "why, we thought you were too fond of our poor girl to marry any body else."

"What, now, if it should be Susan herself," said Ralph; "would you forgive her not writing to you, and love her as well as ever?"

"Ah, if we could but see her sweet face once more," cried dame Homely,

"we

“ we should be too happy to think of any thing else.”

In a moment Ralph was flown to the lane, where his wife had sunk fainting at the bottom of the chaise. He lifted her out, and carried her in his arms into the farm, where the overjoyed father and mother by turns caressed and wept over her.

Thus restored to the tenderness of her parents, Susan by degrees recovered her spirits, to relate what had been agreed on between her husband and Sybella : whether they put faith in all she uttered was unknown to her, as they felt too happy in beholding her again, as the wife of honest Ralph, to reproach her for the past.

True to his word, her husband took the mill by the duke's lodge, and there he and Susan continue to reside in uninterrupted harmony. Once every year her parents paid them a visit, as Susan excused herself from leaving home, having
a young

a young family to attend to ; but, in reality, not wishing to behold a place which could not fail to remind her of the loss of her innocence.

Cicely and Dupree welcomed her return with every testimony of affection ; and, like her parents, kept their fears to their own bosoms. She was returned to them, the wife of a very excellent young man, and with every appearance of content and happiness ; they therefore prudently forbore to wound her feelings by any questions respecting the cause of her long estrangement, satisfied that, whatever errors she might have been led into, her heart was still the same, and her manners as untainted as formerly.

Susan kept up a regular correspondence with her protectress, who now went by the name of Digby, and never failed sending her and Maria part of the produce of her own house ; they, in return, made her a present of all her baby's caps, and worked several little tasteful

articles for herself, which were treasured up by the grateful Susan and her honest husband.

The presents they received from the mill, and the profits of their business, soon enabled Sybella and Maria to live in ease and comfort; and Deloraine had the delightful gratification of hearing that they were now effectually saved from the want and wretchedness they had so long been struggling under. The pleasure he felt at learning the unexpected good fortune of Susan was increased by being an eye-witness of her happiness. The mill belonged to the estate of the duke, who went with him to call on Ralph, and who rejoiced, as well as himself, at Susan's restoration to her family and friends. No doubt remained in the minds of either concerning the cause and object of Susan's estrangement; both attributed it to Courteney—indeed Maria had hinted as much in private to Deloraine, when recapitulating

lating to him all the baseness of her brother-in-law.

It was this increased knowledge of his hypocrisy and consummate dissimulation that made the duke and Deloraine tremble at the idea of the lovely favourite of lady Caroline having become the object of his malignity. As soon, therefore, as they had received the letters which were expected, they set out on horseback, accompanied alone by Jem, whom they sent forward to apprise his mother of their coming, and to caution her against hinting to any one of their arrival.

They were no sooner become occupiers of their former chambers, than Deloraine proposed sending for Mrs. Mason, as it was not improbable but that she could give them some information concerning the object of their mutual solicitude. On the duke agreeing to this proposal, he dispatched Jem with a note to Mrs. Mason, requesting her at-

tendance next morning ; but she, anxious to learn what had again brought him to the farm, walked over to it the same evening.

Knowing how worthy she was to be the confidant of all his movements, Deloraine imparted to her the interest which the person of Ellen Woodville had excited in the mind of the duke, and the words he had overheard from Courteney, with their dread lest they should allude to the lovely stranger at the Castle.

Mrs. Mason, who tenderly loved Ellen, now became alarmed in her turn ; yet she could afford them no satisfactory intelligence. She had heard a rumour among the servants, that Miss Beaumont and Courteney were inseparable companions, and that she bore Ellen some ill-will, on account of the attentions paid her by lord Edwin. The marchioness had also looked cool upon Miss Woodville since the ball, and her maid had found her in tears more than once ; but the

the rest of the family behaved as affectionately as ever, and Courteney was even more attentive to Ellen than usual.

“Then he is intending to injure her!” cried Deloraine.

“God forbid!” hastily exclaimed Mrs. Mason, “for I love her dearly, and so does the whole household. I would not have any harm happen to her for all the world; beautiful as she is, that is the least of her perfections.”

“See!” said the duke, exultingly, “even Mrs. Mason grows young again, in the praise of this enchanting girl!”

“Heaven and all good angels guard her!” continued Mrs. Mason; “and yet I know not what harm can happen to her in our house. She is seldom away from lady Caroline; but as I see her every night, when she retires to her chamber, should she mention any thing to me which may lead to a discovery of the motives of Mr. Courteney’s supposed en-

mity, I will let you know. Ah, how grateful the sweet girl would be, did she but suspect that she had two such powerful friends so near her !”

“ I *must* see her,” said Deloraine ; “ my curiosity is painful. How, Mason, can I obtain a view of her, without being discovered ?”

“ It is most likely that she will call at the farm to-morrow,” replied Mrs. Mason ; “ I heard lady Caroline say that she meant to fetch Mrs. Benson’s little boy ; if so, Miss Woodville will accompany her. Now that you have awakened my fears, I shall be on the watch for every information concerning the actions of Mr. Courteney.”

“ Do so, my good friend,” said the duke. “ I half intimated my suspicions of his duplicity to Miss Woodville, on the night of the ball, and promised to see her again, and explain more fully my meaning. I shall at present, however,
remain

remain concealed, trusting to your vigilance to give me the alarm, should any thing occur to strengthen our fears."

Morning came, and with it the accomplishment of Deloraine's wish. From the window of his chamber, partly overshadowed by the rich foliage of the woodbine and wild-rose, the duke discovered the niece of the earl and her friend approaching the farm.

Deloraine had a perfect view of each countenance; their veils were thrown up, and they seemed in earnest conversation.

"Now, Edmund," cried the duke, "have I suffered myself to be led away by a mere phantom of imagination? tell me, is not Miss Woodville worthy of the highest praise?"

"She is an angel!" replied Deloraine, with emotion; "surely some evil spirit has conjured up this beautiful creature to put our fidelity and love to the utmost test. Smile not, my dear duke; I

am fairly caught, and, like yourself, feel inclined to worship this young divinity. What grace ! what elegance of form ! what lovely regularity of feature ! oh, what a soul, what an intelligent mind, beams in her celestial eyes ! Strange, incomprehensible are my feelings ; they impel me to rush down and press her to my bosom ! Aid me, dear Fitz-Aubin, in finding out a clue to discover the singularity of our sensations : the affectionate solicitude I already feel for Ellen Woodville seems not to violate the sanctity of my passion for my sainted Althea ; my heart throbs with a delicious tenderness, yet it differs from that which my adored wife could alone inspire.”

“ I am lost in wonder like yourself,” replied the duke ; “ but let us listen to the magic tones of her voice ;” then opening the door gently—“ hush ! that is Ellen speaking.”

Deloraine trembled ; her voice stole sweetly into his ear—again he listened,

scarce

scarce venturing to breathe, lest one word should escape. He heard them preparing to return with the little boy, and he flew to behold again the form, the face, which had so completely enchanted him; his quick and penetrating eye eagerly ran over the countenance and figure of Ellen, yet no fault could he discover in either; at length the bend of the road hid them from his sight.

Closing the casement, with a look of self-reproach, he said—"Dear Fitz-Aubin, however we may have suffered ourselves to be deluded by the suggestions of our inclinations, yet as Miss Woodville's *person* can alone have given birth to our present feelings, as our reason tells us she can have no other claim but what her beauty and innocence inspires, let us fly from the danger of such a temptation, nor vainly rely upon the immutability of our vow! Fain would I believe that what I now feel does not interfere with my sacred attachment to the memò-

ry of my Althea; yet, Fitz-Aubin, how can I account for my agitation, for the secret spell that seems to bind me to this young creature, that prompts me to fold her to my heart, and, if necessary, even to die for her sake? already I love her with no common passion—yet, I call Heaven to bear me witness, it is as pure, as holy as that of angels! it is unmixcd with the remotest sentiment of desire, however incredible such an assertion may appear: nevertheless, I will not expose myself to be thus agitated again. Let us return, my friend; let us preserve our vows sacred; let us guard them from even the shadow of violation.”

“ Not till I have spoken with Miss Woodville,” replied the duke; “ I must not leave her entirely ignorant of the capability of Courteney to injure her; I must say enough to convince her that he deserves not the character he has so long maintained in that family; her confidence in his holiness, his sincerity of
profession

profession, must be shaken, in order to save her from the snare which, most likely, he has designed for her. After this is done, we will return to the Lodge, if you continue to wish it."

CHAP. V.

COURTENEY, the morning after the ball, accompanied the marchioness and Miss Beaumont in a stroll through the wood. His ardour for mischief received a momentary check, as he remembered the gipsy's prophecy. Notwithstanding, however, his superstitious credulity, which, at any other time, and under any other circumstances, would have influenced his conduct, he persisted in representing Ellen to the marchioness as a coquette of the worst sort.

"Alas!" said he, assuming an air of

bitter regret, “how deeply is it to be lamented that one so young, and so seemingly innocent, should be guilty of such artifices, should be capable of veiling her deep-laid plans under the appearance of perfect innocence ! already has she seduced away the destined husband of this amiable and neglected lady ; her brother also is become an object of her speculation. Not contented with the flattery of two lovers, she seeks to procure fresh food for her insatiable vanity. The noble marquis has not escaped from her syren influence, regardless of the misery which this criminal levity must entail on *her* she *professes* to love and esteem.”

“ Oh Heaven ! ” exclaimed the marchioness ; “ and is it possible Ellen Woodville is the base and hypocritical character you represent her ? Would to God that I had never taken her from the calm abode of the Parsonage—that I had never been the means of throwing her into the way of temptation ! Oh, my dear Mr. Courteney !

Courteney ! help me repair this error of judgment ; advise me what to do in this unfortunate case ; I tremble at the possibility of the marquis becoming attached to Ellen ; his eyes too plainly declare his admiration of her beauty, his delight whenever he can procure her as a companion. To you alone, my worthy friend, I look for comfort and relief. Save my husband from being too firmly enslaved by the blandishments of Ellen, and my gratitude will be eternal !”

“ Restore to me my Edwin,” said Miss Beaumont, “ and I will acknowledge you, dear Courteney, to be the saviour of my peace, the preserver of my happiness !”

“ To effect this,” replied the hypocrite, “ I am ready to hazard every thing ; but, my dear ladies, it will be no easy matter to accomplish, since Miss Woodville has so completely gained the affection of lady Caroline and her uncle, that they seem uncomfortable whenever she is out of their sight. I will, however, think what
3 can

can be done to restore your minds to their former tranquillity ; at present, one only alternative occurs to me ; perhaps you may object to it ; if so, I confess myself at a loss to know how the fatal and certain consequences of her imprudence is to be prevented."

"Hush !" cried Miss Beaumont ; "do I not see some persons moving through the trees ? lord Edwin, I know, is gone with his mother to the village."

"It is the marquis, and Ellen Woodville on his arm," said Courteney, "with lady Caroline and Mr. Beaumont. Let us stand aside while they pass us."

"No, we will meet them," replied the marchioness, trembling with agitation, yet hastening forward.

The marquis had just taken the hand of Ellen, whose beauty was heightened by the blush of modest diffidence, as she felt compelled to be a silent listener to her own perfection, when Courteney and his companions appeared. Their unexpected

pected presence embarrassed the marquis, while Ellen, smiling sweetly, expressed her pleasure at the meeting.

“Will you not walk a little way with us, my dear marchioness?” said she. “This path is invitingly beautiful, and your company will add to the charms of our ramble.”

“I am tired, and mean to return,” replied the marchioness; “you are too well attended, Ellen, to require an addition to your party. — A wife is but too often an unwelcome intruder.”

Ellen, although surprised at this *capriccio* of her friend, was going to reply, when lady Caroline, looking full at Courteney, said, “You are out early this morning, my dear sir. I dare say your usual goodness induced you to bear my sister and Miss Beaumont company; I hope they have been edified by your pious exhortations.”

A something like a blush passed over the cheek of Leopold.

“Your

“Your ladyship,” said Clarissa, warmly, “only does justice to the kind intentions of Mr. Courteney. The marchioness and myself were inclined to take advantage of the weather, and as we had no beaux to accompany us, he, out of pure charity and compassion to our neglected states, offered to escort us through the wood.”

“Who ever doubted the *compassionate* feelings of my worthy preceptor?” retorted lady Caroline. “To *women*, in particular, he is a *steady*, a most *disinterested friend*!”

“We detain you, Caroline,” said the marchioness, moving onward, to the extreme delight of Leopold; “I wish you and Miss Woodville an agreeable walk.”

Her wish was a vain one. Ellen was not accustomed to the sound of “Miss Woodville” from the lips of her once affectionate friend. She feared that she had displeased her, and her varying countenance betrayed her inward vexation.

“What

“What is the matter, Ellen?” inquired lady Caroline; “I can see, by your tell-tale face, that something has disturbed you.”

Ellen confessed her fears.

“Impossible!” cried the marquis, warmly. “Jemima can never feel offended with *you*; she must be the most capricious of human beings, were such to be the case.”

“Oh no, my lord,” hastily replied Ellen, “the marchioness is incapable of being unjust to any one; I must unintentionally have committed some fault, and shall not rest until I have made amends for it.”

“Lovely, bewitching creature!” whispered the marquis; “trust me, if you have a fault, it is too great a one to receive pardon. It is of so heinous a nature, that even Jemima, I begin to suspect, can no longer tolerate it.”

“You alarm me, my lord; pray speak more plain. The affection of the marchioness

chioness is too valuable to be trifled with."

"Caroline, cannot *you* divine the irreparable failing of Miss Woodville?" said her brother. "I think you can; for *you* are unlike the generality of your envious sex, and possess a soul and mind too noble to be degraded by the mean passion of envy or jealousy."

Lady Caroline loved praise, especially when coming from those to whom she was attached. "I think I know your meaning, brother," said she, smilingly. "Ellen is too handsome to have many *female* friends. In short, my dear girl, if you do not wish to be poisoned, or to have your eyes scratched out of your head, let me seriously advise you to marry as soon as possible. Come, come, smile as usual, Ellen; Jemima, I dare say, is only a little mortified at discovering that her husband thinks the same as all his family. I foresee, my lord, that unless you pay more attention to my sister, and less to
Ellen,

Ellen, we shall have sad dismal faces to encounter."

Ellen had dropped the arm of the marquis in fear and trembling, and taken that of lady Caroline. The blood rushed into the face of the marquis, who immediately replaced the hand of Ellen in its former situation. "If such is your belief, Caroline, I assure you Jemima is not likely to have even as much of my notice as she has at present. My spirit will not brook any undue authority in my wife. If she is inclined to jealousy, she shall not want for occasion to feed it. I have been my own master from my cradle, and will not now submit to any restraint."

Lady Caroline perceived that her brother's anger was unfortunately excited, and she therefore changed the subject to one more pleasant; but neither the marquis nor Ellen could converse with their accustomed cheerfulness. On their return to the Castle, the former retired to his study,

study, and the latter hastily sought his wife, to inquire if she had really given her reason to be offended at any part of her conduct?

Ellen found the marchioness alone, and evidently labouring under some disagreeable reflections. Not as usual did the presence of her young friend disperse the gathering cloud on her brow. To the affectionate questions of Ellen, she coldly replied, that, unless she was conscious of having committed some impropriety, it was not likely that she would seek to obtain a pardon.

Ellen's face and neck crimsoned. All the dignified pride of her nature now filled her heart.

"I might deserve this reproach from any one but yourself," said she, blushing still deeper; "for then my present conduct might be deemed a meanness; but from your ladyship, whom I have so long and so tenderly loved, I did not indeed expect it. Affection alone induced me
to

to seek an explanation of what I conjectured could spring only from displeasure. Pardon me for having intruded upon your time, by my over solicitude to make atonement, in case I had unintentionally given you offence." Then curtseying respectfully, she returned to her own room.

"It is but too evident," said she, "that I have, in some way or other, forfeited the good opinion of the marchioness; yet I am perfectly ignorant of my fault, unless she is weak enough to be jealous, because I am sometimes, and against my will, compelled either to listen to the conversation of the marquis, or join him in our family concerts. Miss Beaumont too has long conducted herself coolly towards me. Good Heavens! am I to blame, because lord Edwin prefers my society to hers? Ah me! I begin to wish that I was back at the Parsonage. Yet, is not this wish ungrateful to the affectionate,

tionate, the noble-minded Caroline? Lord Edwin, too, how has he offended, that I should grow tired of the Castle, and, like a sick child, sigh for home? I will seek Mr. Courteney; he can best advise me how to regain the love of Jemima."

Ellen now proceeded to the apartments of the hypocrite, who was far from satisfied with the late scrutinizing glances of lady Caroline, and was pondering over the most probable reasons for her conduct, when Ellen modestly inquired if she might be admitted? Courteney immediately reassumed his general cast of countenance, and, taking her hand, said—"To what, my dear child, am I indebted for this pleasing visit? Have you received letters from the Parsonage?"

"Oh no, my dear sir," replied Ellen, "but as I have ever found you ready to advise and direct my inexperience, I am now come to entreat your aid, under my present uneasiness and mortification."

She

She then imparted to him her fears, and the result of her application to the marchioness.

Leopold soon soothed her ruffled spirits, by assurances that she was mistaken in her suspicions, as it was improbable that her friend could be so unjust as to be offended without any evident cause. "Do not alarm yourself, my dear girl; the marchioness has perhaps had some words with the marquis, which may have influenced her conduct, and put her out of humour for a time. Trust me, she will very shortly be sorry that she has dealt so unkindly with you."

Ellen willingly believed what she so ardently desired to be true; yet her hopes again forsook her, after the expiration of a week, and no return of former kindness was visible, either in the words, looks, or actions of the marchioness. The marquis was also sullen and discontented; yet, as if to increase the vexation of Ellen, and the illiberal suspicions

picious of his wife, he was even more attentive than ever to the innocent object of her resentment.

Poor Ellen was supported under her present sorrow by the fatherly kindness of Courteney, who still advised her to hope that her old friend would see her error; for he now no longer attempted to deceive her into the belief that the marchioness was not offended, but counselled her to make light of the matter, and not to let it disturb the serenity of her temper, since that might be construed into a proof of her own consciousness of deserving the indifference which she experienced.

Lady Caroline, as usual, warmly espoused the cause of her favourite, for whose sake she did not hesitate to pronounce both her sister and Clarissa Beaumont two weak, silly, and illiberal-minded women. The rest of the family were as kind as ever. Lord Edwin, in particular, when not in the presence of his uncle,
made

made no scruple of declaring his tenderness; and Ellen began to feel more happy in his attentions, more grateful for his steady and unchangeable affection.

It was at this time that Deloraine and the duke of Fitz-Aubin arrived at the farm, and that the latter, agreeable to the wishes of his friend, prepared to seek a private interview with Ellen Woodville. This was only to be obtained through the friendly medium of Mrs. Mason, who, according to her usual custom of visiting her every night before she retired to bed, took that opportunity of delivering to her a note from the duke.

Ellen, greatly surprised at finding him so near her, and yet wishing to remain concealed from the family at the Castle, could not refrain from imparting her ideas to the venerable nurse of the lamented countess, to whom she read the letter containing the request of his grace, which was, to meet him, the next night, in the chapel of the Castle. This strange

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conduct alarmed her delicacy, and she instantly determined to write a refusal; but the advice of Mrs. Mason altered her intention.

“ You have nothing to fear, and every thing to hope,” said she, “ from the request of the duke, whose sole motive is to warn you from some impending mischief. Remember, my dear child, it is no young and tender lover that solicits this step; it is the generous, the noble friend of my beloved mistress and her husband. Oh, do not scruple to place the most implicit confidence in his grace—do not wound him by any shew of reluctance to gratify his wish !”

“ Yet, my dear Mrs. Mason, consider, should any of the family, by some unlucky chance, discover my visit, or perhaps meet me on my return from the chapel, how could I exculpate myself from blame, or clear myself from suspicions injurious to my honour ?”

“ It is not at all probable,” replied her
aged

aged friend, "that any of the family should be stirring after midnight, and you can go down the back staircase, and along the private passage which leads to the chapel; there will then be but little fear of your seeing any one. I would go with you, but that his grace desires that you may be unattended."

Ellen at length consented, and Mrs. Mason left her to her own reflections. These were not of the most enlivening nature. It was evident that the duke, a stranger to her until the evening of the ball, suspected that some treachery was in agitation, and that she was the object; yet who could intend her any harm? who even could wish to injure *her*, who had never intentionally given pain to a human being? "Ah!" said she, "but have I ceased to remember that even the amiable and almost perfect daughter of lord Mortimer possessed a secret enemy, who, in reality, was the cause of all her sufferings? how then can I, who am far her inferior,

ferior, be thus surprised at having a hidden foe. Oh, my Theodore ! wert thou but near me, to counsel, to direct my actions, I should not fear the malevolence of any earthly creature—I should not need the interference of the worthy Fitz-Aubin !”

The whole of the next day was rainy, and prevented lady Caroline and Ellen from taking their accustomed walk. Towards evening the gathering clouds gave notice of a storm ; and the marchioness, who was terribly alarmed by the quick and vivid flashes of the lightning, fainted in the arms of her husband. Ellen’s affection made her forget every thing but her friend’s present indisposition. She, in the tenderest manner, assisted to restore her to animation, and used every gentle and endearing artifice to sooth her fears, and divert her ideas from the storm, which now raged with increasing violence.

“The Lord have mercy upon all hypocrites and sinners !” said lady Caroline.

“ If

“If I had not a very clear conscience, I think I should feel a little awkward just now. What say you, Mr. Courteney? I dare affirm that no danger would appal *your* irreproachable mind.”

Courteney, unfortunately, was not the bravest man in the world, and his countenance just then gave sufficient proofs of his want of firmness. “Your ladyship forgets,” said he, “that it is an undisputed fact, that some constitutions are physically affected by the lightning. In that case, the most abandoned villain may behold unmoved the fury of the elements, while the pure and innocent, as in the present instance of the marchioness, cannot avoid betraying the strongest marks of alarm and terror. *Your* ladyship’s nerves, however, are luckily too strong to be thus painfully affected.”

Another dreadful flash again overpowered the marchioness, and her husband, accompanied by Miss Beaumont, carried her to her chamber, and, to the great gra-

tification of Ellen, remained with her during the remainder of the tempest. This occasioned the family to separate later than usual, and Ellen hastened to her room, where Mrs. Mason was expecting her.

“What a dreadful night!” said the latter. “I should hardly think the duke would keep his appointment. It still lightens, and the distant thunder rolls awfully over the Castle. Shall I step and see if his grace is waiting?”

“No, my dear Mrs. Mason,” replied Ellen: “the air is humid and chill; you might get cold. I will wrap myself in this velvet mantle, which will keep me from the damp.” Then taking a small silver lamp in her hand, she prepared for her midnight visit.

“Heaven protect you, my sweet child! Shall I stay here till your return? Naomi has been asleep this hour.”

“Thank you, my kind friend; I will not be long,” replied Ellen, who now,
with

with quick but light footsteps, hastened to execute her promise.

Breathless with the fear of being discovered, she gained the chapel; a cold shudder crept over her as she entered it. Dim and obscure was every object, which now and then became visible from the faint rays of her lamp. She paused to take breath. Some one approached; sick and trembling, she supported herself against a monument; it was that of the countess. By the glimmer of the lamp, she recognized the features of the duke.

“Dearest Miss Woodville!” said he, taking her cold hand in his, “I had despaired of seeing you this tempestuous night; but in every thing you rise superior to your sex’s weakness.”

“Your grace is much mistaken,” replied Ellen; “even now I tremble lest my visit should be discovered, and I entreat that you will lose no time to acquaint me with the purport of yours.”

“My ardent desire to behold you
14 again,”

again," said his grace, " would not allow me to make known my communication by letter. Here, at the tomb of this martyred angel, let me warn you to guard against the apparent piety, and seemingly disinterested friendship of Courteney. The beloved being whose matchless form is now mouldering beneath these stones, once thought as you do of this perfidious dissembler, yet he basely betrayed her confidence, and that of his best friend, the husband of her choice. This artful hypocrite, by a series of deceptions, gained the esteem of her father, to whom he disclosed the marriage of his only child, and to whom there is little doubt of his having basely calumniated her husband. You start, my lovely unbeliever; oh! you do not know half his baseness, half his perfidy to your sex! From his character, which I am well acquainted with, I have every reason to dread lest he is desirous of ruining you in the estimation of the family, and per
haps

haps of adding you to the long list of those who have fallen victims to his duplicity."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Ellen, "and can your grace seriously believe all this of a man who for so many years has preserved the most unimpeachable name? What cause can he have for enmity to me? Why should he take so much trouble to ruin me with those I love, since I have ever paid the utmost deference to his opinions and advice?"

"The habitual vileness of his nature," replied the duke. "Oh, my dear Miss Woodville! do not shut your ears to the admonitions of one who is but too well convinced of his treachery to those whom, having the strongest claim on his protection and support, he abandoned to all the horrors of want and wretchedness. God grant that my fears may be groundless! but who could he mean but yourself, when speaking to Miss Beaumont of the favourite friend of lady Caroline?"

The duke then repeated the words that he had heard spoken by Courteney on the night of the ball.

Ellen turned sick. They could allude only to herself; yet still she seemed unwilling to give credit to what rendered the benevolent, the devout Courteney, an object of the most horrible depravity.

“I am too strongly interested in your welfare,” continued the duke, “not to dread the secret machinations of this foe to woman. Yet now that I have cautioned you against his professions of sincerity and regard, I trust in God that you will be enabled to avoid any snare he may have laid for your credulity. How long, dear Miss Woodville, are you to remain under the same roof with this profligate man?”

“I know not the exact length of my stay,” replied Ellen, “but I believe till November, when the chief of the family return to London. But I shall now continue

tinue with fear and suspicion, since your grace would not surely assert any thing against Mr. Courteney that he did not deserve. Oh, how little did my dear mother imagine in what hands she was placing her child, when she entreated him to be my director and adviser ! Base as he must be, I will not betray him to my generous lady Caroline, who has long suspected that he is very nearly all that your grace represents him."

"I would not harrow up your feelings," said the duke, "by narrating facts of his wickedness and cruelty, that have come within my knowledge, and that of Mr. Deloraine, who, having seen you, dear Miss Woodville, from the farm, when you called the other morning with lady Caroline, feels as deeply interested in all that concerns you as myself."

"Accept my grateful thanks," replied Ellen ; "and, should your grace ever pass the Parsonage, I hope you will honour my mother with a call. She will

be anxious to express her sense of the obligation thus conferred on her daughter. I must leave you now ; yet believe me, your advice, your caution, and the solemnity of the place in which it was given, will not fail to make a due impression on my mind. I shall ever consider your grace as one of my best friends."

"Enviably distinction !" exclaimed the duke, pressing her hand to his bosom ; "and thou, blest spirit ! at whose awful monument I am thus permitted to warn thy kindred excellence, of him who so deeply injured thee, oh, hover over this sweet maid, and by some secret spell give notice of impending danger, to save her from the diabolical power of that vile hypocrite !"

Ellen took leave of her friendly monitor, and hastened, with cautious step, to the interior of the Castle ; while the duke let himself out of the grounds by a private door, of which Mrs. Mason had given him the key.

The

The faithful friend of the sainted countess now became the confidant of Ellen Woodville, and she repeated to her all that had passed between herself and the duke.

“ Well, God forgive me,” cried Mrs. Mason, “ if I wrong him, but I always suspected Mr. Courteney was the cause of poor Susan Homely’s elopement ; and now that the duke affirms him to be so bad a man, my suspicions are confirmed.”

“ Nothing can be more painful,” replied Ellen, “ than to discover depravity in those we love ! So highly have I always esteemed Mr. Courteney, that not any thing but the assurances of his grace could tempt me to give credit to his unworthiness. My dear lady Caroline has long had strong suspicions of his hypocrisy, but never would I give any belief to them ; and even now that I am compelled to renounce all hope of his still being the excellent character he appears to be, I will not increase the dislike of
lady

lady Caroline, or subject him to her pointed innuendoes."

"And yet it is a pity," said Mrs. Mason, "that such a dangerous person is not unmasked, that all the world might know and avoid him; he must be the most artful of men to have so long deceived my lord and all his family. Mercy on me! I shudder to reflect that the marquis and his brother were educated by this worthless creature; what opportunities has he not had of poisoning their tender minds, and perverting their principles! The marquis was too stubborn to be much under his direction, but lord Edwin's mild and yielding disposition rendered him an easy tool in the hands of a wicked man."

"And yet, my dear Mrs. Mason, his lordship seems to have passed through the fiery ordeal unhurt."

"Ah, I hope he has; but, my dear child, remember that 'smooth water runs deep;' he is but young; time alone will
prove

prove if he has escaped the contagion he has so long been exposed to."

The possibility of lord Edwin, the beloved counterpart of Theodore Woodville, being tainted by the precepts of Courteney, gave Ellen the most serious uneasiness. It disturbed her rest for that night, and visibly affected her spirits; yet Ellen was of too happy a nature to continue long under the influence of dejection. It was more than probable that lord Edwin had escaped, since the general tenor of his conduct was so perfectly amiable, that it authorized this opinion. Courteney was also represented as acting chiefly with duplicity to her own sex. He might, therefore, as well as from prudential motives, have concealed from his pupils all those artifices by which his own actions were regulated. How easily we credit what we wish! how readily does the mind accommodate itself to the desires of the heart!

The increasing tenderness of lord Edwin,

win, and his solemn assurances that he could never love Miss Beaumont, by degrees brought Ellen to listen to his avowals of attachment, and to make a sort of half-confession that he was not viewed with indifference. The remembrance, however, of his uncle's wishes respecting him and Clarissa, together with lord Mortimer's known ambition, prevented her from encouraging his hopes, or acknowledging to the full extent her own secret prepossession in his favour. His lordship was nevertheless well assured of her preference, which was betrayed by many little trifles, of which she herself was ignorant. So dearly did he love Ellen, that in spite of the remonstrances and advice of his preceptor, he would have risked the displeasure of his family, could he have persuaded her to a clandestine marriage. Once he had hinted to her his wish, but she immediately silenced him. He was, however, determined to try once more what love
and

and persuasion could effect, and therefore anxiously sought an opportunity of speaking to her in private, lest the watchful eyes of Courteney should discover what would draw on himself his reproaches and his scorn.

CHAP. VI.

ELLEN was incapable of acting with dissimulation, and therefore could not wholly hide the change in her opinion which had taken place since her nocturnal visit. She however strove to conceal her repugnance to the sight of Courteney, by avoiding him as much as possible. Notwithstanding this precaution, the wily hypocrite had sufficient quickness to discover that Ellen no longer sought his society, no longer greeted his approach with the smile of pleasure ;
and

and he set down this alteration to the *good offices* of lady Caroline, who, for some reason or other, he felt assured was not kindly disposed towards him. Conscious of his evil intentions, he had not the courage to question Ellen concerning the cause of her shyness; solacing himself, however, with the idea that she was not likely to become acquainted with any thing he feared to be disclosed.

One circumstance afforded him subject for deep meditation; it was this:—on the night of the storm, he had made an assignation with Miss Beaumont's maid, a woman of loose morals, whom he had met occasionally in the wood, and who shewed no repugnance to his advances. He was returning from her chamber, down the back-stairs, when the rays of Ellen's lamp startled and alarmed him, and induced him to retreat with precipitation; he stopped, however, on recollecting that it must be one of the family, as the domestics were all safe in their
own

own rooms. The construction of the staircase, which was of a spiral form, enabled him to see from above who passed on to the landing-place of the gallery leading to those rooms belonging to the late countess, lady Caroline, and Miss Beaumont. To his utter astonishment, he beheld the light and graceful form of Ellen Woodville, and felt the most rack-ing curiosity to learn the cause of her being up and alone at that hour; he was, however, constrained to bury his desires in his own bosom, since he could not gratify them without being obliged to account for his own wanderings; yet, where could she have been? what could occasion her to chuse the private staircase, since, supposing that she had been to the library, that was by far the most circuitous route?

Of all improper motives, demon as he was, Leopold nevertheless acquitted Ellen; in his own mind he firmly believed that a being so free from fault was rarely

ly

ly to be met with ; and he gave her ample credit for possessing every virtue that her lovely features and still more lovely manners seemed to indicate ; yet the deadly hatred which he bore her urged him to calumniate one of God's most perfect creatures, and to sully, by the foulest aspersions, the purest actions.

He had disclosed his plan to the marchioness and Miss Beaumont ; the latter, eager to get rid of her rival by any means, instantly signified her approbation ; but the marchioness, although smarting under the belief that Ellen was coquetting with her husband, and trifling with her own peace, nevertheless rejected a proposal which would expose her former favourite to the severe displeasure of Mrs. Woodville, and disgrace her with her warmest friends at the Castle—
“ Let us, my dear sir,” said she, “ hope that Ellen will discontinue her improper levity. Already she appears conscious of having done wrong, since she never
walks

walks alone with the marquis, and seems to shun his attentions ; to write to her mother an account of her conduct, and request her to be recalled, would be too severe a punishment of a crime for which she now endeavours to atone."

Foiled in his plan on the marchioness, Courteney for the present laid aside his scheme ; but the restless impatience of Miss Beaumont soon urged him to exert afresh his talents for mischief—" Jemima," said she, " is so silly as to believe that Miss Woodville is sorry for the uneasiness she has occasioned her, and talks of receiving her once more into her confidence and favour. This must be prevented, my dear friend, for I know the marchioness's disposition is such, that should she trust to the specious appearance of Ellen, she will not scruple to betray all her suspicions, and perhaps our private conferences. Something must be done to keep alive her jealousy, until your plan can be put into execution ;
let

let us but get rid of this bane to our repose, and it is of little consequence what Mrs. Woodville may say about her daughter being thus unexpectedly returned to her."

It was not, however, the intention of Courteney that her daughter should return, unless, indeed, lord Edwin chose to play the fool, and let his prize escape. He resolved, nevertheless, to take care and guard against being discovered to be an aider and abettor in the plot, resolving to conduct himself in such a manner that, if necessary, he might still appear the friend, instead of the betrayer of Ellen.

It was now the middle of September, when one fine morning, lady Caroline proposed that the whole party should take their baskets, and go into the woods to gather nuts. This was agreed to by all, and they accordingly prepared for their rambling excursion.

Lord Edwin, who ardently longed for
an

an opportunity of being alone with Ellen, caught the little basket out of her hand, and placing her arm under his own, ran after his sister and Adolphus, leaving the rest of the family behind them.

Lady Caroline said, laughingly, as she entered the path which led to where the gipseys had formerly pitched their tent—“Ellen, do you remember this spot?—*apropos*, my dear girl, do not forget the Ides of March!”

“So, so!” cried Adolphus; “your ladyship, I perceive, has been consulting the dark-eyed sibyls of the wood; what a pity they have emigrated, since, at our approach, we should have been surrounded, and I might have discovered some of your ladyship’s and Miss Woodville’s secrets!”

“And did *you* listen to their folly?” inquired lord Edwin of his blushing companion.

“Certainly, Mr. Impudence!” replied
his

his sister ; “ how dare you to suppose that I engross the whole of my sex’s curiosity, and that Miss Ellen is more *sensible*, more *prudent* than I am ?—Mercy on us, Ellen, you look as confused as if I had betrayed some mighty secret !”

“ What, my dear lady Caroline,” said young Beaumont, “ did the gipsey tell you? Come, do not be ashamed to repeat over the list of conquests you were to make, and the many lovers who were to be killed by the fire of those bright eyes. I dare say she told you the name and complexion of your future husband—did she, Miss Woodville ?”

“ Shall I satisfy Mr. Beaumont, lady Caroline ?” said Ellen, archly.

It was now her ladyship’s turn to colour and look embarrassed.

“ There are some fine nuts in that path,” cried Adolphus, exultingly ; and hurrying away his lovely partner, left lord Edwin and Ellen free to converse unrestrained.

“ Will

“ Will you not follow your sister, my lord ? ” inquired Ellen. “ Look how they hang in clusters down that walk ; indeed they are much better than these . ”

“ No, dearest Ellen,” replied his lordship ; “ I have too much regard for the feelings of my friend to deprive him of the charming opportunity he now has of rallying my lively sister for her frolic, and making her sue for peace on his own terms : but may I inquire what glorious destiny awaits *you* ? what would I have given to have heard unseen the disclosure of your future fortune ! tell me, lovely Ellen, were you satisfied with the prediction ? ”

“ I scarce remember what it was,” she replied, colouring deeply, as she uttered the intentional falsehood ; “ but, my lord, you have hardly gathered any nuts yet ; your sister’s basket will be full before mine . ”

“ Never mind that, my sweetest love ;
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though I may venture to affirm that Beaumont, like myself, has not been very industrious: but I think we will go further into the wood; these nuts, as you observe, are not the finest."

Lord Edwin now struck into a path less likely to be frequented by any of the party. Ellen began to break off the tempting bunches with an eagerness which made his lordship smile.

"You are right, my sweet girl; we will fill the basket, and then I can converse undisturbed on the subject nearest my heart."

Ellen immediately relaxed her haste, but her companion redoubled his, and the basket was soon full—"Now, my beloved Ellen," cried he, with smiling pleasure, "our task is done, let us repose a little from our labour; let us sit down under the shade of these trees, and enjoy the delightful privacy around us."

He

He gently placed her on the verdant turf, and throwing himself beside her, pressed her hand tenderly to his lips.

“ Oh, Ellen !” said he, “ such a moment as this is worth half a man’s life—my God ! what felicity would it be to possess the privilege of enjoying many such ! yet the rapture I now taste is not without alloy, since, to confirm my bliss, I ought to be assured that your feelings are in unison with mine. Tell me then, dearest Ellen, is there a hope that my tenderness will ever be returned ? Do not break that nut, my love, you may injure your teeth ; give it me.”

His lordship now broke several for her ; and Ellen thought them the sweetest she had ever tasted, although it was only the shell that had touched his mouth.

“ Tell me, I conjure you,” he continued, “ may I flatter myself that, could my uncle’s consent be obtained, you
K 2 would

would not refuse me the possession of your heart?"

"Why, my lord," she replied, in a faint voice, "do you again recur to a subject which is painful for me to listen to? painful, because I know that lord Mortimer would never yield to your solicitations."

"Yet, my dearest Ellen, it will afford me life and hope if you would but bless me with the rapturous sound of my being the object of your preference! I swear by Heaven, that to obtain your hand I would sacrifice all that I am possessed of! do not, therefore, refuse me a happiness which is in your own power to bestow!—can you love me, Ellen?"

"Alas, my lord, I am so poor a dissembler, that I only fear you are but too well convinced of my sentiments in your favour."

At such a moment as the present all the prudent admonitions of Courteney were

were forgotten—all the impending resentment of the earl; and lord Edwin flung himself on his knees before Ellen, and besought her, in the most eloquent terms, to consent to a private marriage. All that love could suggest was urged in favour of his suit; all that the most endearing fondness could devise was brought up to support his cause.

Ellen did not listen unmoved to the honied voice of the man she loved; her features, rendered more captivating from their blushing tenderness, confirmed the hopes of lord Edwin, who, to do him justice, would joyfully have hazarded every thing to make Ellen his wife; this, however, her own pride refused.

“ Rise, my dear lord,” said she, endeavouring to recover her firmness, “ rise, I beseech you; I have been seduced into a confession which can afford you but little gratification; yet think me not ungrateful for your generous willingness to sacrifice even the favour of your re-

K 3

lations

lations for my sake ; such kindness, my lord, will never be forgotten ; worlds should not tempt me to take advantage of it ! I own the disparity of our rank in life, own it with regret, since that alone prevents my accepting your generous offer with pride and pleasure.”

“ Loveliest of women ! and do you indeed persist in refusing to become my wife ? oh, Ellen, do not reject my proposal of a private union ! you know not the fatal consequences which may result, if you persist in your determination.”

“ I know too well, my lord, what they would be, were I weak enough to yield to your pleadings. Never, my dear lord Edwin, will I meanly steal into any family, and purchase an exalted rank at the price of my husband’s comfort and my own self-esteem. Lord Mortimer would deem himself disgraced by your marrying one less nobly born than himself ; I should feel that I had disgraced
the

the education I have received, and the precepts I have been taught, were I to enter clandestinely into the noblest family in Europe."

The dignified air of Ellen, and the consciousness of hereditary virtue, and a proud independency of spirit which flashed like a gleam of lightning from her beautiful blue eyes, silenced the desponding lover. He rose, and taking up the basket, walked silently by the side of Ellen, who was anxious to meet his sister, lest her heroism should grow weaker, by viewing the dejected air of her brother.

The happy countenances of lady Caroline and Adolphus Beaumont were a strong contrast to those of Ellen and her companion, who, mortified and disappointed, sought nevertheless to conceal his chagrin from the rest of the family, who now joined them on their return to the Castle.

Courteney, at the first glance, dis-
covered

covered the change in his pupil's features, and therefore followed him to his chamber, to learn the cause; while lady Caroline, equally penetrating, quitted the arm of her lover, to inquire what had thus suddenly disturbed the happy disposition of her brother.

Ellen, without any hesitation, repeated what had passed, and her own fixed determination to withstand the persuasions of his lordship.

“ Friend of my soul !” cried lady Caroline, warmly embracing her favourite, “ I thought nothing could increase my regard ; but this noble forbearance, this generous self-denial, has added to the admiration I have ever felt for your character ! Dear Ellen, how few women possess the resolution to deny such a request ! I am sure I do not, neither did my poor cousin, the late countess, since all her sorrows sprung from her imprudent marriage. Thank God ! I am not placed in her situation, for I should certainly

tainly have preferred such a man as Deloraine to all the noblemen in the kingdom."

"So should I," hastily replied Ellen. "Were the rank and fortune on my side, and lord Edwin penniless, my affection would lead me to make the same sacrifice for him as the countess did for her husband."

"My charming friend," replied her ladyship, "I will hope yet to call you sister, in spite of the sulky and ill-natured looks of Clarissa, and the pride of my uncle. Edwin, I suppose, is gone to his worthy preceptor, who, no doubt, will extol *your* conduct, and bestow on *his* weakness his most terrific censure. I do not think, Ellen, that your opinion of Courteney is quite as favourable as it was; you certainly are not as familiar with him as you were.—But I almost forgot to tell you what a delightful morning I have spent with Adolphus; he has

K 5

been

been so attentive, so uncommonly entertaining, that if he continues so agreeable, I shall make my *entrée* this winter as lady Caroline Beaumont."

"Nothing will afford me more sincere pleasure than to salute your ladyship by that name; you could not have chosen a more amiable, a more deserving object, nor one more sensible of your merits."

"Once," replied lady Caroline, "I was in great doubt of his sensibility on that point; I believe, my dear Ellen, he was caught by the blaze of your beauty; but I was too *sweet tempered* to complain, and loved you too much to dislike you for what you could not help. I have not lost by this conduct, for Adolphus, who is as candid as myself, confessed that my *wonderful liberality* and *generosity* recalled his wandering affections, which are now my own beyond the power of change."

Naomi now entered, to deliver letters

to her mistress from the Parsonage ; and lady Caroline quitted her, in hopes of receiving some herself from London.

Ellen, with a flutter of delight, ran over the well-known characters of her mother and sister ; the tenderness of their sentiments restored her bosom to its former tranquillity ; but what afforded her most gratification, was a short letter from Theodore, in which he expressed the strongest hope of passing his Christmas with her at the Parsonage, since it was confidentially reported that the regiment would be removed to within ten miles of that dear and sacred abode of domestic happiness, early in November ; he concluded by saying that his friend Colin Maxwell had been sent for express by the old lady whose fortune he was to inherit, all hopes of her recovery being over.

“ In that case,” said he, “ my friend will quit the army, marry Fanny, and turn plain country gentleman, to the

great satisfaction of my mother and sister. I shall feel this deprivation more keenly, as there are none in the regiment worthy to supply his place, none with whom I could associate with any pleasure; I have some thoughts, therefore, of exchanging into the Guards—but more of this hereafter. Colin advises me to make love to the only daughter of a rich baronet who is here, and with whom I am upon very good terms; but I reply to all his friendly admonitions—Almeria is not an Ellen. In vain he tries to laugh me out of my determination never to marry, unless I can find a woman who resembles you. He tells me, that as *that* is impossible, I had better either take the fair hand of Almeria Rochdale, or rivet our family alliance more firmly, by contenting myself with his favourite sister, Stella Maxwell. Could any thing induce me to waver from my purpose, it would be the last-mentioned lady; I have seen her picture, I have listened to her character,

racter, drawn by my bosom friend, and that friend her brother ; yet I still reply—she is not an Ellen.”

How flattering this enviable preference from the brother she so idolized ! how did she rejoice at the recent victory she had obtained over her affections—a victory that made her worthy the distinguished partiality of Theodore ! Not as usual did she run to present her mother’s letter to Courteney, but waited until he was assembled with the rest of the family in the dining-parlour ; she then gave it him, without making any comment upon its contents.

Leopold, struck more than ever by her manner, yet unwilling that she should perceive it, returned the letter of Mrs. Woodville with one of his hypocritical smiles, expressing his satisfaction at hearing that they were all well at the Parsonage.

“ Has my mother written to you, Mr. Courteney, by the same post ? ”

“ She

“ She has done me that honour,” he replied ; “ I did not shew it you, because it merely contains a repetition of her too flattering sentiments.”

There was, however, another reason ; Mrs. Woodville had written concerning the confidential communications she had made to Courteney, before he left sir Godfrey’s, and which were to remain a secret from Ellen, as well as from her other children.

“ You are infinitely *too modest*, Mr. Courteney,” said lady Caroline, “ *too diffident* of your own merits ; a mind and heart such as yours ought to feel as conscious of its superior value as those do to whom your sterling worth is known.”

“ Your ladyship forgets,” replied the hypocrite, in a tone of well-feigned humility, “ that among the few instructions I had the honour to give you, I invariably cautioned you against yielding to the dangerous voice of flattery : it seems also that I should have admonished your
ladyship

ladyship not to turn flatterer; as praise, coming from lips such as yours, would tempt an anchorite to grow vain."

"A very pretty compliment, Courteney," said lord Mortimer; "and Caroline will receive it with more gratification, because it is bestowed by you."

Of this, however, both the pupil and the preceptor were very doubtful, since neither of them believed the words of each other.

As the Lisburnes and Ashfords were expected in the evening, Ellen retired to her room after dinner, to make some little alteration in her dress; this done, she recollected that she would have time to finish a favourite romance, and therefore hastened down to the library for the last volume. It was necessary that she should pass through an apartment close to that in which the younger part of the gentlemen, and Courteney, who remained with them, were still enjoying the

the pleasures of the glass. Ellen was proceeding to the study, when she stopped suddenly at the sound of her own name, given as a toast by the marquis.

“Come, come, Edwin,” said he, “confess at once the reason of your evident vexation; Miss Woodville and you quarrelled this morning about the colour of the carriage, or the amount of her settlement, or some such trifle, I dare say; but do not grieve, my dear boy, you know ‘lovers’ quarrels are only the renewals of love.”

“I do not understand you,” replied lord Edwin; “you know my uncle’s intentions are no secret, I should therefore be mad to oppose them. It would have been more to the purpose if I had differed with Miss Beaumont about the nonsense you mention.”

“My sister,” said Adolphus, warmly, “would, I hope, reject all offers from a divided heart. She is not without discrimination,

crimination, and must, therefore, have long ceased to expect any love from lord Edwin."

"You cannot be in earnest, Beaumont? Surely the unmeaning gallantry, which has influenced my actions towards Miss Woodville, cannot interfere with my intended union with your sister."

Ellen hardly breathed; she felt a chill come over her whole frame; her heart palpitated violently; and she sunk on a couch almost lifeless. The loud and angry voice of Adolphus kept her from fainting.

"And is it possible, my lord," he cried, "that you can avow such dishonourable sentiments? Is Ellen Woodville, one of the most lovely, the most amiable and innocent of women, an object capable of inspiring such feelings in the breast of any man? Unmeaning gallantry! By Heaven! I cannot express the indignation which I feel at the idea of trifling with the tenderness of such an angelic creature!

ture! Oh, my lord, how you have deceived me! I thought you loved Miss Woodville with all that fervour of passion to which she is so capable of giving birth. I feel satisfied, however, that the marquis and Mr. Courteney will join me in testifying their disapprobation of your conduct."

"You are *rather* too warm, Mr. Beaumont," said Leopold, respectfully. "Suffer me to remind you of the unpleasant situation in which your friend is now placed. The beauty of Miss Woodville may have fascinated his senses, and misled him for a time into an appearance of indifference for Miss Beaumont. I believe he is sensible of the error he has committed, but it is not of a nature to be easily rectified."

"My dear tutor," replied lord Edwin, struggling with his own contending emotions, "I am accountable to no man for my actions, if I except my uncle, whose paternal care and affection give him a superior right over me. I should have
thought,

thought, however, that Mr. Beaumont would not so readily have taken offence at my wishing to atone for my late neglect of his sister ; he is at liberty, nevertheless, to think what he pleases."

"Speak, marquis !" cried young Beaumont, with unabated warmth ; "speak, nor be silent in the cause of injured innocence ! Shew me the man, independant of lord Edwin, who would not die in the defence of such a woman as Ellen Woodville !"

"Thus called on," replied the marquis, "I must throw aside all prudence, and avow, in spite of the presence of my worthy tutor, that my opinions are the same as yours. I think Miss Woodville the most perfect of her sex, and were I free to-morrow, would glory in raising her to my own rank in society."

"My noble fellow !" exclaimed Adolphus, pressing his hand impetuously, "such a heart, such a mind, is worthy a monarch."

"Yet

“Yet hear me, my dear Beaumont,” continued the brother of the embarrassed culprit; “notwithstanding this acknowledgment of what *I* would do, I cannot in conscience advise Edwin to risk the eternal displeasure of my uncle. I know he would never forgive his uniting himself to one whom he would consider as his inferior in birth. I know also that he has long wished him to marry your sister. I pity Edwin, for being exposed to so powerful a temptation as Miss Woodville’s matchless person; and I condemn him from my soul, if he has for an instant trifled with her affections, or gone further in his professions than what gallantry would authorize. Such, I trust, is not the case. But, my dear Beaumont, what would Caroline say to the warmth and energy of your expressions in favour of another?”

“The nobility of lady Caroline’s soul is like your own,” replied her lover; “she would be the first to applaud my
defence

defence of her favourite. The generosity of her mind I have myself experienced very lately, and it has bound me more firmly to her than the most solemn tie. Lady Caroline now possesses the whole of my heart, which once, I confess, was but too much inclined to wander to her friend."

The marquis now rose—"I shall rejoice," said he, "to hail as brother the man whom on earth I value most as friend. But let me see you and Edwin shake hands, in token of a perfect reconciliation."

"I can never willingly be at variance with one so nearly related to lady Caroline," replied Adolphus, taking the offered hand of lord Edwin who felt humbled and abased at the despicable part he had been forced to act, in obedience to the advice of his tutor.

They now quitted the dining-parlour, and Ellen, who had not had power to move while they remained, slowly dragged

ged her trembling limbs to her own chamber. Here she flung herself on the first seat that presented itself, and found a little relieved by giving way to her tears. It was now, for the first time, that the heart of Ellen knew real agony, except when deprived of her father, by the will of the Almighty. It was now that she experienced the severest disappointment, the severest woe—the object of her innocent adoration, the counterpart of her Theodore, had debased his heavenly likeness, and become unworthy of her esteem. From being icy cold, she became burning hot; her cheek was flushed with fever, and her breath parched the soft skin of her lovely mouth.

In this state she was discovered by lady Caroline, who came to fetch her, as their guests were already arrived. “Heavens! my beloved Ellen!” said her affectionate friend, “what is the matter? you look in a high fever. My hand shrinks from the scorching touch of yours. Dearest Ellen,

Ellen, let me send off Simpson directly for advice; I am quite miserable about you."

"I shall be better presently," replied Ellen, breathing with difficulty, and trying to force a smile; "indeed I shall soon be better. Go down, my dear friend, and make some excuse for me; but do not excite any alarm; I will join you, if possible, after tea."

"I will not leave you, Ellen, in this state; at least let me send for Mason; I am certain you are very ill. What can so suddenly have brought on this raging heat? Tell me, my love, has any thing affected your spirits? You know, Ellen, *I have no reserves from you.*"

Neither would Ellen, in any other case, have hid any thing from lady Caroline; but to betray to her the baseness, the unpardonable duplicity of her brother, was impossible; and she rejoiced at the entrance of Mrs. Mason, who became equally alarmed with lady Caroline.

"Oblige

“Oblige me, my kind friend,” said Ellen; “return to the drawing-room. Indeed, indeed I shall be better soon; if not, I will send for you; but let me beg that you will make light of my indisposition.”

Lady Caroline, sorely against her inclination, now left her, to make the necessary excuse for her absence; and Ellen no sooner found herself alone with the venerable confidant of the countess, than she flung her arms round her neck, and again burst into tears.

“My child! my lovely child! what am I to guess from this distress? It is not bodily suffering that would thus weaken the powers of your firm mind. Relieve your full bosom, by disclosing to *her* who was thought worthy to be trusted by my adored mistress, the cause of this violent sorrow. Has the marquis, in the heat of youthful passion, forgot that he is no longer free? Who has drawn
forth

forth these tears, these sobs, my dearest child?"

"I will tell you all," replied the weeping Ellen, "for to you alone will I confide the wreck of all my fondest hopes. Alas! that I should live to utter it!—lord Edwin is the disciple of Courteney, the follower of his fatal counsels!"

Again she sunk on the bosom of her affectionate friend and confidant, who, kissing tenderly her cheek, mingled her tears with those of the deeply-afflicted Ellen, who, when a little recovered from the effects of this heavy blow, repeated to Mrs. Mason the whole of what she had heard.

"Alas! alas! I feared, I know not why," said Mrs. Mason, "the baneful influence of Mr. Courteney over the too yielding mind of lord Edwin, and am fully persuaded that even now he acts under his guidance. Take comfort, my sweet child; his lordship may be misled

for the present by his vile counsellor, but he will still prove worthy your good opinion, and make amends for this act of weakness."

"Never! never!" exclaimed Ellen; "the illusion is over! it was but this morning he used the most endearing persuasions to induce me to a clandestine marriage. I withstood all his eloquence, yet confessed that he was not indifferent to me. In so short a time to change, to avow that his attentions arose merely from gallantry, and that he still meant to fulfil voluntarily the wishes of his uncle, shews a depravity of heart, a weakness of intellect, that shocks me beyond belief. Oh, my dear Theodore! for whose sake alone this cruel man became dear to me, how differently would *you* have acted, under similar circumstances! How grateful am I now, for that independency of spirit, which taught me to reject the offer of stealing into rank and power! What
would

would have been my fate, if I had married lord Edwin, and then discovered the pernicious principles on which he acts !”

“ You had better lie down, my child, and try to compose yourself. Continue to draw comfort from your own firmness ; had you yielded to the entreaties of his lordship, who is really to be pitied for wanting *that* which has saved *you* from years of regret, I am too well convinced, that, notwithstanding the earl’s regard for you, he would never have been led to receive you as his niece.”

“ It is not the loss of lord Edwin’s hand that I lament thus bitterly, it is the loss of his honour. Oh, my worthy friend, I had decked his mind, his soul ! with all the virtues that can ennoble human nature ! in my imagination, he was every thing that could increase his resemblance to my beloved Theodore : but oh, how unlike that dear brother how unlike the marquis or lady Caroline. Never, also, can I be too grateful for the

manly and generous indignation expressed by her lover ! Dear Caroline, I will not wound thy noble friendship by a disclosure of my injuries !”

“ Be persuaded,” said Mrs. Mason, “ by an old woman who loves you dearly ; lie down, I will sit by you.”

“ Not this once, my kind friend, must I take your advice : I am much better, and wish to join the company, if only for an hour ; my total absence I know will increase the terror of lady Caroline, and give uneasiness to all who love me ;” she sighed deeply at the last words.

Notwithstanding the weakness of her body, she began to repair the disorder of her dress and hair, assisted by Mrs. Mason, who said—“ It is so long since I have been thus employed, that my fingers refuse their wonted office. Will you not put some flowers on your head ?”

“ Not unless you can bring me a wreath of poppies,” replied Ellen ; “ they suit best with a breaking heart : yet I
surely

surely had a sprig of orange blossom in my hair when I fell almost senseless on the couch in the anteroom: I must have dropped it there in my agonies: dear Mason, should any of the family find it, my involuntary listening will be discovered."

"I will go in search of it," said her worthy confidant, who, nevertheless, returned unsuccessful.

"Then I fear I am betrayed," cried Ellen, "for well do I remember now that the flower fell from my head, but that I had not power to recover it; perhaps the marquis, or, what is worse, lord Edwin or his preceptor may have found it; and my knowledge of their conversation will, by this unfortunate circumstance, be discovered. I will try to look as well as I can—to conceal, amidst forced smiles and gaiety, the pangs of blighted love. Help me, dear Mason, to throw off this robe—give me that one of white satin; it will be a contrast to my

burning cheeks. Now let me place on my head the wreath of pearls given me by my faithful Dora—and in my bosom fix this bunch of artificial heart's-ease. Oh, when will this agitated breast know any other?—How do I look, Mason? do my tell-tale features betray the secret anguish which pervades my soul? I would be all life, all spirits; I would drown in excess of exhilaration the recollection of——lord Edwin's frailty!" she put her hand to her burning forehead.

Mrs. Mason sighed—"You will suffer for this over-exertion, my child, I fear; but if you will go, be quick to return; I cannot rest until I have seen you safe in bed; go, and I will make ready something proper for you to take."

Lady Caroline now entered to inquire after Ellen's health, and was surprised to see her thus elegantly attired, when she had dreaded to find her undressed for the night.

"My

“ My Ellen,” said she, affectionately, “ you are far from well, in spite of all your good-natured intentions to conceal it from me ; you have dressed yourself most becomingly, but the flush on your cheek, so unlike its natural bloom, confirms my fears. You shall just shew yourself, to dissipate the chagrin which has been felt at your absence ; and then, to oblige me, retire, and try to get rid of this ugly fever.”

To this Ellen, who was in reality seriously indisposed, readily assented, and with trembling limbs and forced spirits, which vainly hoped to hide what passed within, she followed lady Caroline to the saloon of the Castle.

CHAP. VII.

THE entrance of Ellen Woodville was greeted with the kindest inquiries after her health. The marquis and Adolphus Beaumont both met her, and conducted her to a seat ; while lord Edwin, abashed at the cowardly part he had been constrained to act, continued talking to the youngest Miss Lisburne, not daring to turn his eyes towards the woman whom, in his heart, he preferred to all the world, but whom he had not courage openly to acknowledge as such.

The state of Ellen's feelings made her receive their attentions with an animating gratitude, which once more alarmed the jealous temper of the marchioness, and surprised even Courteney, who sat next her.

" Surely," said the former, " Miss
Woodville

Woodville might have been excused from taking such pains in adorning her person, when the deep colour on her cheek denotes her indisposition; what could induce her to increase it by coming down this evening?"

"It is not difficult to answer that question, I fear, madam," replied Leopold; "what but her unwillingness to lose the pleasure of accompanying the marquis in the intended concert of to-night? she is more beautiful even than usual; neither the marquis nor Mr. Beaumont can quit her for a moment."

The poison of his words ran through the veins of the credulous marchioness, who turned pale as again she yielded to her former suspicions. Courteney purposely rose to attend to lord Mortimer, who had beckoned him; he well knew the effect of what he had just uttered, and he was desirous that it should sink deep into the mind of the marchioness.

Lord Mortimer, who, with sir William Lisburne and general Ashford, was sitting at the further end of the room, had been speaking to them in the highest terms of Ellen's various accomplishments; among the rest, he dwelt mostly on the uncommon richness and sweetness of her voice—"Go. Courteney," said he, "and tell Miss Woodville, that if she is not fearful of exerting herself too much, she will greatly oblige me by singing one of the Scotch airs she learnt when at home; if she has no objection, let it be that beginning with 'Cou'd I hope.'"

The marquis was just expressing his fears that she was too much indisposed to join in the evening's amusement, and regretting the loss he should sustain, when his tutor advanced, and delivered the request of the earl.

To play and sing under her present illness, and, above all, the air selected by lord Mortimer, was more than Ellen deemed

deemed her fortitude could sustain; she nevertheless resolved to attempt it, and Beaumont readily flew to fetch the harp.

“ My dear friend,” said lady Caroline, “ your willingness to give pleasure will, I am afraid, be attended with great inconvenience to yourself; let me excuse you to my uncle.”

“ No, I thank you,” replied Ellen, forcing a look of gaiety very foreign to her heart; “ if I can possibly sing, I must not disappoint the earl;” then striking the chords of the harp, she played a beautiful prelude, preparatory to the song; and pausing for a moment, to collect all her firmness, she sang the following lines in a voice sweet, thrilling, and but too tenderly expressive of her own emotions :—

“ Cou’d I hope you’d ay be true,

My pleasure wad be past expressin’;

Cou’d I hope you’d ay be true,

I’d seek frae Heaven nae ither blessin’.

But, oh! 'tis cruel when a youth

Has made our heart for master chuse him,

'Tis cruel then to break his troth,

And leave a viper in the bosom."

Lord Edwin, at the sound of Ellen's melting voice, quitted the side of Matilda Lisburne, and joined the group who had gathered round the lovely performer. The words of the air seemed to reproach him for his recent want of candour; they called the blush into his cheeks; humbled and self-accused, he cast his eyes on the ground, as he encountered those of the songstress, humid with tears.

A variety of painful ideas filled the heart of Ellen, who had exerted herself to the utmost, to obey the wish of lord Mortimer; but the sight of his nephew, who stood near her, and whose handsome features evinced his consciousness of the applicability of the lines, bereft her of all her assumed fortitude; overpowered, her head sunk on the harp, and she would have fallen to the ground, but for the
the

the watchful care of lady Caroline, who, much alarmed, received the form of her fainting friend in her arms.

All the company were now interested for Ellen, and the dowager marchioness, to whom she had particularly endeared herself, assisted to convey her to her chamber; while lord Mortimer immediately sent off one of the servants for medical aid, and the pleasure of the evening was completely broken up by this unlucky accident.

Ellen was put to bed, by Mrs. Mason and Naomi, in a high fever, to the inexpressible grief of lady Caroline, who obstinately refused to leave her bedside, but insisted on remaining, and would suffer no one to administer any thing to her favourite except herself. This generous friend derived the most heartfelt satisfaction from the opinion of the doctor, who pronounced that the fever was not a dangerous one, and that proper remedies would soon abate its violence.

Lord

Lord Edwin, strongly affected by her indisposition, never once thought of going to bed all night. He stole frequently to the door of her apartment, to inquire of his sister if Miss Woodville slept; all personal consideration seemed lost in his anxiety for her recovery; and so sincerely did he regret his having exposed himself before his brother and young Beaumont, that he could not avoid expressing his sorrow to Courteney that he had followed his advice.

The conduct of lord Edwin in the dining-parlour was owing to a conversation which had taken place between him and his tutor, on his return from the wood. His own vexation and disappointment at the firm refusal of Ellen to his proposal of a private marriage, was but too visibly depicted on his countenance; and the cunning of Leopold soon drew from his pupil the confession of his blighted hopes.

As might be expected, Courteney
highly

highly censured the honourable attachment of lord Edwin. “Rash young man,” said he, “have I not promised to make her yours upon more advantageous terms? what could induce you thus to tempt the eternal resentment of your uncle? have I not already risked my own interest and my hitherto unspotted name to gratify your foolish passion? and had it not been for the whim, the momentary fit of prudence, which Ellen displayed, all my care would have been thrown away, and you would have been irrecoverably lost! Trust me, my lord, I know the nature of the sex better than you do, and would not advise you to hazard another such an offer; has not she already acknowledged that she loves you, and is she not therefore more than half won to your purpose? It depends now entirely on yourself to preserve the favour of your uncle, and yet possess the person of Ellen Woodville; follow only my advice, and I’ll engage she shall be yours in less than a month.”

Notwithstanding

Notwithstanding this counsel, Leopold did not think proper to entrust his pupil with the whole of his diabolical plan, until he had got him too far engaged to retract.

“Begin,” continued the hypocrite, “to relax in your attentions to Ellen, and renew them to Miss Beaumont; the affection of the first will be alarmed by this change in your behaviour, which will correct her pride, chill her aspiring hopes, and mould her more easily to your wishes; while the latter will joyfully hail your returning kindness, and accept you once more as her destined husband.”

It was this criminal counsel, joined to the mortification of Ellen’s determined manner of rejecting him, that caused lord Edwin to deny his intentions respecting her, and to draw upon himself the contempt and anger of Adolphus Beaumont. Her calm and healthful countenance at dinner, which gave no presage of
of

of indisposition, and the suddenness of her illness, so short a time after she had retired, excited in the bosom of his lordship emotions of alarm and terror, lest she should by any means have become acquainted with his dishonourable conduct.

The exquisite pathos with which she had sung the little Scotch air, and the effect it had visibly had on herself, gave rise to the same idea in more minds than his lordship's. Young Beaumont, the generous advocate of Ellen Woodville, had similar fears with lord Edwin ; while the marquis, from one little circumstance, felt convinced of the real source of her illness.

The antichamber in which Ellen had so painfully discovered the duplicity of her lover led to several apartments, among the rest, to that of the music-room ; and the marquis, after he had joined the ladies, repaired thither to fetch a music-book for his wife. The sprig of
orange

orange blossom, which Ellen had dropped, and which he had observed in her head at dinner, was lying on the ground, at the foot of the couch on which she had rested. This, and her subsequent indisposition, were both alarming proofs of her having overheard a part of their conversation, as well as of the deep impression his brother had made on her heart—a discovery that gave serious uneasiness to the marquis, who had, until very lately, always believed her affections to be pre-engaged, from the report of his tutor.

Incapable of violating the rules of honour himself, he felt keenly the dissimulation used by lord Edwin, and resolved to take the first opportunity of speaking to Ellen, and of being convinced of the real state of her sentiments. If he found her immutably attached to his brother, he determined to use all his influence and interest in her behalf with his uncle; since, in his opinion, the nature of lord
Edwin's

Edwin's attentions had been such as to authorize her to look forward to becoming, one day or other, his wife.

Ellen, meantime, passed a tolerable night, under the watchful care of lady Caroline and Mrs. Mason; and found herself able to sit up by the dinner hour next day, yet gladly availed herself of her continued weakness, and the advice of her doctor, and proposed to remain, for that day and the next, in her own room.

The excellency of her understanding, and the religious principles she had imbibed from her amiable mother, taught her to resign herself without murmuring to the will of Heaven. Yet Ellen felt that she could have more easily yielded to lord Edwin's marriage with another, than to the discovery of his wanting those virtues of which she had believed him possessed.

To find that he was capable of fooling with her affections, of trifling with the
peace

peace of her future life, of deceiving her into a belief that *she alone* was able to make him happy, and at a time when he evidently meant to fulfil the wishes of lord Mortimer, was such a refinement upon cruelty, such a specimen of hypocrisy, that it required all the hereditary pride of her nature to withstand the shock, by remembering that *she* was the object upon whom he had thought worthy to try his powers of deception.

Dearly as she loved lady Caroline, and grateful as she felt for her uniform tenderness, particularly under her present illness, yet she resolved, if possible, to conceal from her the infidelity of her brother, from motives of kindness, judging from her own sufferings the pain it would give her ladyship to be informed of his baseness.

When Ellen heard of the anxiety lord Edwin had manifested, and his constant inquiries after her, during the first night of her illness, she could not help testifying

Ang her surprise that he should still continue to dissemble.—“ To-morrow,” said she, “ my dear Mason, I must see this cruel man, when I join the rest of the family : how shall I assume sufficient firmness to conceal my knowledge of what has passed—to repel all advances that he may have the assurance to make ? Oh, Edwin, I wish not to expose thee ! even from my own family would I hide the fatal consequences of Courteney’s tutelage.

‘ When thou recordest my many courtesies,
And shall compare them with thy treacherous heart,
Lay them together, weigh them equally,
’Twill be revenge enough.”

“ Alas !” replied Mrs. Mason, “ I cannot help pitying my young lord, since I am confident his fault proceeds from the dangerous principles he has imbibed from that bad man ; no child ever gave a fairer promise of every virtue than lord Edwin.”

Ellen

Ellen sighed deeply ; it was the sigh of agony.—“ You promised me,” said she, “ to relate the melancholy incident which occurred to the mother of the late countess, in her first attachment ; tell it me now, dear Mason, if you please ; it will charm away the bitterness of my own reflections, during the absence of lady Caroline.”

“ Then it must be by exciting your sympathy for the woes of an amiable woman,” replied Mrs. Mason, “ who, like her lovely daughter, had sense enough to prefer merit in obscurity, in preference to an increase of rank and fortune. The mother of my lamented mistress was the only surviving child of the marquis of Rosslin, and countess of Brandon in her own right ; her person, like that of the lady Althea, was lovely and graceful, and her disposition equally gentle and affectionate. I had the honour to be foster-sister to the young countess, whose playfellow I became, as
often

often as the family returned to their country seat, where my parents resided, the one as butler, and the other as house-keeper to the marquis, with whom they had lived many years.

“ It was my particular good fortune to attract the notice of his lordship, as I was one day chasing the countess over the lawn, and he immediately called to me, and asked me several questions concerning the progress of my education, which was no other than what my mother’s leisure moments could afford me. Ah ! well do I remember the sweet smile of his daughter, when next I saw her. ‘ Alice,’ said she, ‘ you have pleased the marquis so much by the sound sense you displayed the other morning, that he has given me leave to have you always about my person, and to teach you what I like. You know how I love you, Alice ; but you know not how happy my dear father has made me by this kind permission.’

“ From

“ From that day I became the constant companion of the countess, during those hours when she was not with the marquis and marchioness; she took delight in forming my mind and manners according to her own taste; and I look back upon those years of my childhood with melancholy pleasure, as they were some of the happiest of my life. The countess, who was but too susceptible of real merit, wherever it was to be met with, had early discovered it in the youngest son of the clergyman of our village; and soon imparted to me, who was the confidant of all her thoughts, her regard for Horatio Stuart. He was indeed an object calculated to inspire affection, possessing every recommendation of person and mind to excite love and esteem.

“ The marquis was more partial to this young man than to the rest of his family; he gave him a pair of colours in an old Scotch regiment, which was then stationed in Scotland, as soon as he discovered

covered his inclination for the army; and made him a handsome pecuniary present at the same time, to enable him to join it, and to prevent him from feeling embarrassed on his first entrance into life. Never shall I forget the sorrow of the countess on hearing the news of his intended departure—it was *then* her misfortunes began.

“On the morning that he called to take leave, the countess, unable to conceal her agitation, hastily quitted the drawing-room; and calling for me, took my arm, and hastened into the park, where, throwing herself on the turf, under a large tree, she gave vent to her sobs and tears.

‘Oh, Alice!’ said she, ‘I fear Horatio will think my leaving him so abruptly proceeds from indifference to his welfare. I wished to present him with some trifling remembrance, but my courage failed me, and I dreaded lest my tears would betray the state of my heart.’

“ I tried to afford her all the consolation in my power, but her grief only increased.

‘ I shall never see him again,’ said the countess; ‘ I feel, Alice, that I have parted with Horatio for the last time. Oh, what would I not give for one of his light ringlets—it would be far more dear to me than all the jewels of the East ! Alas ! he is leaving us, perhaps for ever, since I heard my father say that his regiment, in all probability, would be ordered on foreign service ; and Horatio may therefore never know how dearly, how tenderly I love him !’

“ A rustling among the trees made us start ; the countess and I leapt from our seats ; it was Mr. Stuart, whom we now saw hastily proceeding home, by a path close to where we had been sitting. At the sound of the countess’s voice he stopped, turned round, and discovered a countenance struggling with a variety of emotions.

‘ Mr.

‘ Mr. Stuart,’ said the countess, ‘ I wish to apologize to you for my seeming rudeness of this morning ; but I felt myself suddenly indisposed, and was compelled to walk out into the open air. You leave us to-morrow, perhaps for many months—nay, years ; yet do not suffer new friends, new connexions, to obliterate from your memory those whom you have made in your native village.’

‘ Never, never !’ replied the young soldier, with energy ; ‘ they will live in my heart ; and the remembrance of the kindness I have met with from your ladyship’s family can only be effaced by my death.’

“ The countess drew from her finger a valuable diamond ring, and requested him to wear it for her sake ; I saw his colour rise as he accepted the present ; and a tear which fell on the hand of the countess, as he raised it to his lips, betrayed to me his knowledge of her value. He was out of sight in a moment ; and

I, whose heart was at that moment full of sympathy, could not refrain from telling my dear mistress that I was sure she was beloved by Mr. Stuart.

“ The same evening a letter was brought me by one of the village maids ; it came from the grateful lover of the countess, who requested me to give an enclosure to my lady. Ah, my dear Miss Ellen, until *then* I was ignorant of the mighty power of love upon the human frame. The moment the countess read the letter which I gave her, her tears were those of rapture, and her dejected looks were changed for those of blissful hope ; in short, her whole form was animated by its contents. It enclosed a lock of his hair, which he said he had the presumption to hope she would retain for his sake ; and he declared, that the tumult of his feelings had made him hurry from her in the morning, lest he should be surprised into the avowal of sentiments which he had perseveringly

ly

ly endeavoured to repress. Whatever might be his fate, he should never forget the gratitude and respectful affection that was due to her ladyship and her noble family; nor would he ever cease to exert himself to the utmost, to prove himself not wholly unworthy their goodness.

“ The countess pressed repeatedly the letter and the hair to her lips; the latter she put into a locket, and placed it in her bosom, which she wore day and night ever after, until she became the wife of lord Mortimer; cherishing the fond hope of being secretly beloved by Horatio, and trusting to his return, which she vainly imagined would bring with it the accomplishment of her heart’s dearest wishes.

“ Some months after the departure of Mr. Stuart, the marquis with his family went to town, where the countess was presented at court, and where she was first seen by a nobleman of great fortune

and great power, who took an early opportunity of soliciting the permission of the marquis to pay his addresses to my lady. The match would have been highly advantageous, had the state of her heart permitted her to accept it; but as it was, she begged so earnestly to be allowed to remain single, until she was more acquainted with the world, that my lord, who was dotingly fond of her, consented to her request, the countess not being then quite seventeen.

“ Oh, how often has the lady Althea reminded me of her mother, when she used to talk of Mr. Deloraine, and of what she would go through, if necessary, for his sake! Both were fated to fall victims to their tenderness for men of talent.

“ Many a tear have I shed, as I listened to the love and the despair of the marquis's daughter, during her conversations with me on the probability of her lover's return. Her fears lest he should fall a
sacrifice

sacrifice to the climate, or the fate of the war in which he was destined to be engaged, kept her in a continual state of alarm. At length the intelligence arrived of a battle having taken place. The conflict was sanguinary, and the loss considerable; among the names of the officers who had fallen was that of Horatio Stuart. It was then that the countess betrayed, for the first time, to her parents her secret attachment, and received from them every tenderness her melancholy situation required; but it was to me alone that she ventured completely to unbosom herself, and to express her deep and irremediable distress.

“ When next she appeared in public, which circumstances constrained her to do much sooner than she would otherwise have wished, lord Mortimer saw and became enamoured of her person. *He* also had met with a disappointment in his first attachment, and they became interesting to each other, from the narration of

their mutual loss ; for now that Horatio was dead, my lady hesitated not to avow the partiality she had ever entertained for his worth. In obedience to the wishes of the marquis, who felt anxious to see his daughter established in life, the countess made choice of lord Mortimer, in preference to any other admirers ; and never, I believe, did she experience any reason to regret the selection she had made.

“ A short time after the union of my lady, I married, with her consent, the son of lord Mortimer’s steward ; and upon the birth of the lady Althea, which happened shortly after that of my own baby, I had the honour to become her nurse, the delicate state of the countess’s health not allowing her to enjoy that felicity. I had the misfortune to lose my child, and to experience a still heavier affliction, in the death of my husband. Once more I returned to the Castle, having no tie which could make life pleasant to me, except within its walls.”

“ Three

“Three years and upwards after the marriage of the countess, our tranquillity was interrupted by a serious accident. We had arrived at the Castle for the summer season rather earlier than usual, as the countess expected to be confined with her second child in July, and wished to be attended by the same person as before. It was one fine evening, in the beginning of June, that the countess and I rambled into the wood, where you and lady Caroline paid your visit to the gipseys. The earl was gone out to dinner, and the countess, whose situation would not permit of her walking far, had taken a book to amuse herself, as she rested on a seat which had been placed on purpose for her accommodation. I and my dear charge had proceeded up a winding path, at a little distance from where the countess was sitting, the bend of the path hiding us from her view, when I was surprised by the sudden appearance of a gentleman, who, pale and

emaciated, seemed in the last stage of a decline. He eagerly inquired if that was a child of the countess of Brandon? and on my replying in the affirmative, embraced it with such excessive agitation, that I became alarmed, and would have taken the lady Althea from his arms, but he prevented me. ‘Do not,’ said he, ‘deny me the last pleasure I can now enjoy. Oh, Alice! have I lost all traces of my former self, that you cannot recognize Horatio Stuart?’

“Good Heavens!” exclaimed Ellen, “and was he not dead? Oh, my dear Mason, I dread to hear the conclusion of your narrative.”

“You may suppose, my child,” replied Mrs. Mason, “what were now my feelings. I could scarce stand, and for some minutes found it imposible to give utterance to my words. When I could, I expressed my fears lest the countess should see him, particularly in her present situation, and briefly recounted what had passed

passed since his departure, and the report of his death, which had been generally believed.

‘ Ah, Alice !’ said he, ‘ better far would it have been for me had I died when my wounds gave rise to that report, than thus to have survived the fond hope of proving to your angel mistress the immutability of my adoration. Overpowered by numbers, and dangerously wounded, I fell on the field of battle, and was saved by some of the enemy’s cavalry, who conveyed me to their quarters, and who attended to my wants with great humanity. Slowly I recovered, and passed over into other hands less friendly, who kept me close prisoner for three years. I had the good fortune to be exchanged at last, and to reach my native country, where, on once more joining my dear father and mother, I learnt that the countess had become a wife and mother : my constitution, impaired by my wounds and my imprisonment, could
scarce

scarce sustain the shock of this intelligence, although I had never suffered myself to entertain the presumptuous hope of possessing one so infinitely my superior. Months passed away before I could venture to travel; and I am now, Alice, only come to take one look of her angel face—then die! Do not fear my prudence; her peace is dearer to me than my own.’

“ Again he pressed to his bosom my little darling. I heard the countess call on my name; and at the sound of her voice he trembled so violently, that I was apprehensive lest he should faint, and conjured him to act with caution, for the sake of her he loved. Promising to call on him at Homely Farm, where he was accommodated, I hastened to the countess, who good naturedly chid me for my stay, as the dew was now falling. The innocent prattle of lady Althea soon betrayed that some one had caressed her; and I was obliged to own that a gentleman
had.

Had met us, but pleaded ignorance as to who he was. How gladly did I once more see her enter the Castle, safe from the shock she would have sustained, had she encountered the altered form of poor Mr. Stuart!

“Next day I contrived to go to the farm, where dame Homely soon called forth all my compassion, by mentioning the deplorable state of her new lodger, who she feared was dying. Under pretence of being acquainted with several things good for a consumption, I got a sight of the poor invalid. He had followed us at a distance, and gratified his earnest desire of once more beholding the object of his unshaken attachment.

‘I feel that I shall not live many hours,’ said he, ‘and I conjure you, dear Alice, to give this note to the countess, whenever you see a fit opportunity. The last adieux of a grateful heart, which will then be mouldering in the tomb, cannot infringe on the sacred rights of her husband;

band ; I have seen her, and I die contented !’

“ Poor fellow,” said Mrs. Mason, wiping away her tears of friendly sympathy, “ he died that night.”

Ellen was sensibly affected by the idea of his untimely end. After a pause of some moments, she said—“ Did the countess ever learn the fatal constancy of her first love ?”

“ Yes,” replied her worthy confidant ; “ as soon as she had recovered from her confinement, and got over the loss of her infant, I fulfilled my promise to her deceased lover, and gently broke to her the falsity of the report concerning his death, our meeting, and its fatal termination. Although she bore the melancholy surprise, at first, better than I had expected, yet I am now persuaded that it hastened her own death, which took place three years after. A better wife, a more tender mother, or indulgent mistress, never breathed ; and it was a long, long while indeed.

indeed before lord Mortimer could get over the severity of the loss he then sustained.

“ Never; even to me, did she mention the name of Horatio, after the day of my fulfilling his last request; but, just before her death, when she had made me promise never to forsake her daughter, she confessed that the being unable wholly to discard from her remembrance the man who had travelled so far to take one look of her before he died, and whose letter betrayed the tenderness he had always felt for her, had preyed upon her spirits; since, so sincerely did she love lord Mortimer, that she could not bear to mix his idea with that of another; it rendered her criminal in her own eyes, and embittered every hour of her existence: She died as she had lived, a pattern of every female virtue; and, had it pleased Heaven to have spared the life of her lovely daughter, I am certain that she would have resembled her mother

ther in every thing. But, alas! it has been my severe misfortune to have outlived all those dear and revered objects of my love and veneration—to see the ancient and noble title of Brandon become extinct, since it was the will of the Almighty that not even the infant of Mr. Deloraine should survive to inherit its mother's rank and fortune.”

“ It is our duty to believe,” replied Ellen, “ that ‘ whatever is, is right ;’ yet I confess there are *some* circumstances which our weak minds cannot readily give credit to, as being for the best : for instance—willing as I am to draw comfort from every thing that occurs in human life, yet what consolation can I derive from having discovered depravity where I imagined that only the purest and the noblest qualities resided? or how can I agree that ‘ whatever is, is right,’ since it is neither right nor just that lord Edwin’s heart and mind should sully the beautiful image of his Creator,

or that he should trifle with my feelings, and sport with the peace of my future years?"

"The sentence you have just quoted is from Pope, I believe," said Mrs. Mason; "and does not the same author also affirm, that 'to err is human, to forgive divine?'"

"He does," replied Ellen; "and I think, my dear Mrs. Mason, that it is not difficult to perceive your meaning. Yes, I forgive lord Edwin; may he be able to forgive himself; but never can I look on him with my former admiration. There was a time when the sound of his voice, or the touch of his hand, was capable of producing the most exquisite rapture, when I listened to him with delight, for he spoke and looked so like my Theodore. To-morrow—would that I could escape to-morrow!" she added, with a sigh, "I must once more take my place at the breakfast-table; it used to be by the side of lord Edwin—I hope he will

will not rise to meet me, as he formerly did; the greatest favour he could now confer, would be to avoid me as much as possible. Thus you see, my dear Mason, that what would once have made me miserable, would now be the means of restoring me to my natural tranquillity. The neglect of lord Edwin, before the discovery of his dissimulation, might have broken my foolish heart; but now it is all I desire—it is my hope, my wish to be treated by him with indifference.”

“ Ah, my dear child,” said Mrs. Mason, “ I well remember a line which the mother of lady Althea used to repeat to me, and I think it is applicable to yourself—‘ the shaft extracted does not cure the wound.’ Time reconciles all things; it will blunt the keen remembrance of what you now suffer; and the penitence of lord Edwin will be the first step towards his recovering your good opinion. I shall live, I trust, to see you his wife, and mistress of this Castle; for I begin
to

to hope, from the extreme tenderness lord Mortimer has shewn for you since your illness, that you are become necessary to his happiness; if so, his pride may give way to the desire of having you always with him, and his consent may at length be obtained for your marrying his nephew."

Ellen was going to reply; but the entrance of the dowager marchioness prevented her from giving utterance to the warm feelings which at that moment rushed across her heart.

END OF VOL. IV.

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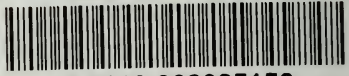
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